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WRITING THE NEW WORLD:
LANGUAGE AND SILENCE IN RICHARDSON, GROVE, WATSON, AND KROETSCH

BY

© MARGARET TURNER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN ~~PARTIAL FULFILMENT~~ OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1986

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ISBN 0-315-32526-7

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DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1986

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submitted by MARGARET TURNER

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Date: June 20, 1986

ABSTRACT

In this thesis I study works of four Canadian authors which demonstrate the process of a country being written into existence. I argue that Canada does not exist as a place in time, in space, or in history until it is created in and by language. A new world culture is faced with the imperative of reforming structures in both the private and public orders--of establishing a meaningful discourse. Until those structures are in place the new world culture remains caught between worlds, in what I refer to here as the middle passage between Europe and North America. The middle passage is attended by silence and absence: to move from Canada as nowhere to Canada as somewhere involves finding a language.

Major John Richardson, Frederick Philip Grove, Sheila Watson, and Robert Kroetsch are variously positioned at the silent stillpoint of the middle passage. In Wacousta Richardson attempts to use the language and procedure of the British military as principles of control and meaning in his new world society, but a white man gone Indian and the natives of North America threaten to topple the structure. Richardson does not have the language in which the fundamental questions of the new society could be posed: he, and Wacousta, remain in the middle passage. Frederick Philip Grove's writing is his re-invention of a self, and a life, in language. His portraits of pioneers are sociological and ethical inquiries into human nature; A Search for America and In Search of

Myself show his attempts to impose an order and structure on the landscape and on his life that he needed to make an authentic meaning out of his North American experience. In The Double Hook Sheila Watson re-invents a language out of the fragments of European and native traditions. She draws attention to the meaning of words by separating signifier and signified, and by suggesting such a range of possible significance that we do not know what the words in her text mean. In the absence of meaningful words she reconstructs language, and a human relation to place. She both plays and privileges language: that tension informs her work. Robert Kroetsch begins by un-naming and un-inventing, and re-invents place, as he makes language the site of his writing. Canada is no more secure for Kroetsch than it is for Richardson, Grove, or Watson: Kroetsch is well aware that if a place can be named into existence, it can also be un-named. In Gone Indian Jeremy invents the northwest, his own new world, and eventually disappears into it.

Richardson, Grove, Watson, and Kroetsch show individuals and cultures caught in silence between worlds and words. In their interrogation of the nature of the new world and the nature of language in it, they question the nature and possibility of human being here. They also draw attention to the silence and absence which attend the new world, and point to various ways of salvaging from it a kind of presence: as they re-invent self, language, and place, they write the new world.

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ONE: INTRODUCTION

NEGOTIATING THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

R. T. Robertson, writing about prairie immigrant literature,[1] uses a concept and a terminology which provide a useful point of entry to this study. He says that all Commonwealth literature is informed by two experiences. One is migration: leaving the home of one's ancestors and making oneself at home in a new land. The other side of the phenomenon is occupation: coming to terms with or perishing at the hands of the migrating or invading culture. Both migration and occupation can be experienced by individuals or groups. Robertson argues that these experiences provide the immediate and raw material for the first period in Commonwealth literature, the Colonial period, and that all later periods, movements, themes, and mythologies inherit the effects of those experiences.

Robertson identifies an intermediate stage in the move from the old world to the new which he calls the middle passage; "the psychic shift from one culture to another involves a middle period of 'wandering between two worlds.' In Christian terms, this is the harrowing of hell."[2] The middle passage may be apprehended

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[1] R. T. Robertson, "My Own Country: Prairie Immigrant Literature," in The Commonwealth Writer Overseas: Themes of Exile and Expatriation, ed. A. Niven (Brussels: Didier, 1976), pp. 75-85.

[2] Robertson, "My Own Country," p. 78.

and experienced as either exile or alienation, or sometimes as both. Exile usually corresponds to the experience of migration and the sense of existing in two worlds, the physical here and the mental or ghostly there, while alienation is associated with the experience of occupation and of existence, as he puts it, as a kind of cultural half-breed in a spiritual no-man's land. The middle passage is suffered, then, by the immigrant who leaves the old world for the new as well as by the indigene, whose old world is radically transformed by the arrival of a new culture.

Robertson highlights the pause in the movement from old world to new. From Robertson's definition of the middle passage as a period of exile and/or alienation preceding identification with the prevailing culture, one assumes that the middle passage can last a lifetime; from the tales of estrangement and strangeness in Canadian literature it is clear that it has lasted for several generations. The middle passage is figured in absence, an absence of public and social structures of organization, and private and individual structures of belonging and identity. Both public and private realms lack structures of perception, imagination, and language to shape an order and meaning for their experience. This extreme dislocation with its physical and psychic trauma, and the associated violence to person and to both former and present place, is one aspect of the middle passage I wish to emphasize. A second characteristic is its silence. As I use the term, the middle passage is a stillpoint, a zero degree if you will, of place, people, and language. Silence —

is the logical and necessary condition in the middle passage, the pendulum swing between somewhere--the old world--and nowhere--the new. It is as if the pendulum stops--for a moment, forever--and in that non-place personal and cultural identity, history, memory do not register, cannot exist. The silence, invisibility, and absence suffered in that pause are carried forward into the new world where the processes of adaptation and accommodation gradually occur. Those processes in Canada and in Canadian literature occur on the high ground of social structuring in the public social and historical domain, and in a language that reflects that order of activity. Only infrequently is attention directed past the structure to the content which makes that structure meaningful; only infrequently are the structures interrogated. When a culture's development is uninterrupted by a move from one world to another, the external structure--the <u>form</u> of social organization--will authentically <u>reflect</u> its content and be a <u>result</u> of its content. In a new society, however, the structure is imposed on absence. The house of cards is delicately balanced: great risks are involved in the questioning or challenging of the fragile framework. The delicate balance in part constitutes the particular tensions within this society.

In his studies of primitive cultures, Victor Turner frames what is essentially the same phenomenon. He emphasizes a stage

similar to Robertson's middle passage,[3] and from Van Gennep's model of the three phases of a rite of passage experienced by an individual or a society takes the notion of limen.[4] The first and third phases of that rite, separation and re-aggregation, are self-explanatory and of marginal significance here. The middle or liminal phase, however, is critical: it is a relatively unstructured, undefined, and potential period in the transition between established states of being. In the liminal phase the subject (an adolescent in a puberty rite, a culture in a more complex state of societal transformation) experiences, in Turner's words, structural invisibility[5] in both space and time. Such a person is neither alive nor dead, male nor female: in seclusion, the subject has no indicators of previous status, no kinship position, no clothes, no name, and very likely no language: no social "reality." A harrowing of hell indeed. In the third phase the individual is restored to the community and identity: the rite is a symbolic way of entering a new condition with a recognized social reality--as a signifier, if you will, with firm and logical connections to the signified within a distinct discourse. Turner makes clear that the ontological transformation

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[3] Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," in The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 93-111, and "Variations on a Theme of Liminality," in Secular Ritual, ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), pp. 36-52.

[4] Turner, "Variations," pp. 36-37.

[5] Turner, "Betwixt and Between," p. 95. My emphasis.

of the liminal phase, including the resulting ambiguity and paradox of the process, does not constitute a structural contradiction but is the essentially unstructured, at once both destructured and prestructured.[6] The subject of the rite of passage is, in my words, absent in the liminal period. Only by passing through the liminal stage to the completion of the rite does the subject become real to him/herself and to the community: the rite makes meaning as it structures the conception of the world, society, and self.

The importance of liminality to this study is at once obvious. I have pointed out that either an individual or a culture can experience these transformations. Consider Canada as the subject of the liminal phase. Consider what happens if the liminal ceases to be a mere transition and becomes a set way of life.[7] As Turner puts it, the phenomena and processes of mid-transition expose the basic elements of culture just when we pass out of and before we re-enter the structural realm.[8] Out of structure, out of place, out of time--invisible, absent, silent. This is what I will discuss here regarding language and silence, and regarding the structure of meaning within the culture of Canada and the context of literature. The loss of structure involves an accompanying loss of history, memory, belonging, and

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[6] Turner, "Betwixt and Between," p. 98.

[7] Turner, "Variations," p. 37.

[8] Turner, "Betwixt and Between," p. 110.

language. The middle passage, the liminal phase, raises questions about the nature of place--this place--and the nature and possibility of human being in it. To move from Canada as nowhere to Canada as somewhere involves finding and using a language. We may see the peopling of the new world as a zero point, an unattached, floating state disconnected from the old world and as yet unconnected to the new. This zero point is charged with questions of structure and meaning, and finds a reflection in what we can call a zero zone in literature. The zero condition of literature reflects a zero moment in language, in which the silence that accompanies a migrant suspension between cultures yields a zero degree of humanity itself. The language of this zero zone is, strictly speaking, silence.[9]

Louis Hartz examines in detail the political and historical conditions imposed upon migrant societies, which he calls fragment cultures:[10] again, the condition that Robertson and Turner examine. Citing Canada, the United States, South Africa, Australia, and Latin America, Hartz describes the fragment culture as curiously timeless and ahistorical, having left its place in

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[9] The terminology here recalls Barthes, although he uses it differently. Sheila Watson, in an interview with me on 16 February 1982, used the term "degree zero" to refer to the movement out of language into dumbness, the deconstruction and recreation of language which is necessary when it has lost its meaning and referents (Kroetsch's "uninventing").

[10] Louis Hartz, The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada, and Australia (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964) and "Violence and Legality in the Fragment Cultures," Canadian Historical Review, 50, no. 2 (June 1969), pp. 123-140.

the historical process. This timelessness relates to the pause, the zero degree, discussed earlier. Leaving one cultural history necessitates the construction or creation of another public, social, historical context. The constructed context resembles its antecedents, just as the fragment culture is initially based on the principles of the original society: the experience of the new culture in the new place has not yet occurred. Therefore, since the constructed context will be divorced from experience at first, it can only be artificial, inauthentic, imposed; it does not exist in a natural or logical relation to the new place. The moral consensus which the fragment culture possesses and which has caused it to occur becomes dogmatic and inflexible, partly because it has no experience in accommodating different views and partly because it cannot afford to entertain serious inquiries for reasons of its own insecurity.[11] The fragment demands consensus--challenges to its values are challenges to reality itself--and reacts to perceived threats with violence, isolationism, and patriotism. This patriotism, often a new nationalism, fortifies the fragment process. The morality of the fragment is protected by avoiding contact with alien cultures, such as the aboriginal, whether that be accomplished by extermination or reservations.

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[11] Although he does not use the language of sociology, D. G. Jones has the same insight in his discussion of how the official culture becomes more and more willed as it is threatened by hostile forces without and subversive forces within (Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature [Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1970], p. 36).

The violence of such confrontations and responses reflects the violence of the fragment's generation.

Hartz's discussion of the way new societies construct themselves and their own reality is clearly useful for this study. Canada is such a fragment, or two fragment, society[12] and displays characteristics that Hartz ascribes to a fragment culture. What is most interesting for our purposes, however, is his notion that the fragment culture removes itself from history and from historical process. Time stops in the movement from the old world to the new; the fragment culture can never re-enter the historical process and participate in it as it did previously. Not only is the fragment outside of historical process, but it has no memory of the migration beyond one generation: only those who made the voyage can remember it.[13] The elements the fragment borrows from the parent culture are transformed in the passage. The culture is indeed new, and lacks models, memory, and history.

The ramifications of that out-of-time condition are significant. Clearly, a culture that has stepped out of time and place and has not yet established the basis of its own cultural organization cannot exist as a world-in-itself, with eternity in place. The new culture operates on different values, beliefs, and structures than the old, and by identifying itself and its existence according to those values it decides its own future in

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[12] Hartz calls Canada a two fragment society, referring to the original French and English settlement.

[13] Hartz, "Violence and Legality," pp. 136-137.

what is more nearly an act of creation than a process of development. At the same time it denies its fragmentary existence and claims to be an absolute principle, and can even attribute its own particular history to the conditions of the new land.[14] Hartz argues further that the fragment must eventually confront the revolution in Europe that it escaped by leaving, a confrontation which means bringing itself back into history or discovering just what its history has actually been.

History--historical meaning, historical existence--raises the question of historical narrative, and will eventually bring us to a consideration of discourse. As Hayden White argues in his works on the nature of historical writing,[15] the historian emplots events according to a particular conceptual framework and, in so doing, constitutes the subjects of historical inquiry as possible objects of narrative representation by the very language used to

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[14] Hartz, The Founding of New Societies, p. 10. Canadian history and literature have often been attributed to the conditions of the new land. Harold Innis and Donald Creighton have made significant contributions to this approach to Canadian historical scholarship. Literary historians and critics who have discussed Canadian literature in this manner are numerous, and include: Ray Palmer Baker, Archibald MacMechan, Lionel Stevenson, A. J. M. Smith, Edward McCourt, Henry Kreisel, D. G. Jones, Margaret Atwood, W. H. New, Laurence Ricou, and Eli Mandel.

[15] Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1973); "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," in The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), pp. 41-62; and Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1978).

describe them. Accordingly, the historian does not "find" the form for the historical narrative, but imposes it,[16] an act parallel to the imposition of structure on absence. Historical narratives, then, are verbal fictions, whose contents are as much invented as found.[17] Discontinuity is at the heart of both history and fiction.

White's method is basic to this study. He casts history as a discursive system, a system of rules within which various histories are written. If we think in these terms about the fragment culture which has removed itself from history, we see that it has also removed itself from discourse. This, then, is the source and cause of the absence and silence at the heart of the new world experience. By moving out of history--that is, out of a system of meaning--the fragment culture empties itself of significance in itself, and so must exist in and as an absence until it re-enters history and discourse. In order to re-enter discourse it must find or make a comprehensible way of speaking about itself within a definable system of signification. By doing so it automatically situates itself in language. To quote Lionel Gossman:

> In historical writing, the signs of language become signifiers in a secondary system elaborated by the historian. What already has meaning at the level of language becomes an empty form again until, being brought into relation with a

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16 White, "The Historical Text," p. 57.

17 White, "The Historical Text," p. 42.

> historically definable signifié, or concept, it constitutes a new sign at a different level of meaning.[18]

Discourse is the definable system of signification in which language becomes the signifier. In Michel Foucault's terms, discursive practice is governed by "a group of rules that are immanent in a practice, and define it in its specificity." Foucault says that the unity of discourse is found not in its objects, but in the relations that characterize discursive practice; that is, not in particular usages but in the system which controls usage.[19] Discourse refers to that group of rules, or system. Language refers to particular usages within that system, and provides the possibility of communication and meaning at that level. Hayden White has summed up Foucault's conception of discourse this way:

> Discourse is the term under which he gathers all of the forms and categories of cultural life, including, apparently, his own effort to submit this life to criticism. As thus envisaged, and as he himself says in The Archaeology of Knowledge (1969), his own work is to be regarded as a 'discourse about discourses'.[20]

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[18] Lionel Gossman,"History and Literature: Reproduction or Signification," in The Writing of History, ed. Canary and Kozicki, p. 29.

[19] Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, 1969, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 46.

[20] Hayden White, "Michel Foucault," in Structuralism and Since, ed. John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 82.

In this sense discourse possesses meaning in itself, independent of particular usages, of "language."[21] Bringing language into relation with a definable conceptual structure makes language signify at a second level. When I talk about Canada coming into discourse, I posit "Canada" as the definable conceptual structure within which language functions. In this case the conceptual structure is cultural: the idea of Canada determines the discursive practices which can occur within it.

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann analyze the process of cultural construction in The Social Construction of Reality.[22] Their work is based on the premise that "reality is socially constructed and that the sociology of knowledge must analyze the process in which this occurs,"[23] and considers the ways human beings make their own reality. The point is basic to this study: the world we perceive is a human product, the result of our imposing structure and intelligibility onto our experience. Curiously enough, we perceive the world as an objective reality rather than a human product in a process Berger and Luckmann call

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[21] I see this differentiation as parallel to Saussure's differentiation between langue and parole. To quote from Jonathan Culler : "the former [langue] is a system, an institution, a set of interpersonal rules and norms, while the latter [parole] comprises the actual manifestations of the system in speech and writing." (Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature [London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975], p. 8).

[22] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966).

[23] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 1.

reification.[24] This world as such, a product of our own making, is precarious. They argue that all societies are constructions in the face of chaos and that institutional order is continually threatened by the presence of realities that are meaningless in its terms. The possibility of terror is actualized when the legitimations that obscure the precariousness of the structure are threatened or collapse, as happens when the structure is challenged by an alternative definition of reality.

The connection here to language is crucial: language is the basis and instrument of the collective stock of knowledge and as such, it realizes a world by apprehending and producing it. Language functions as the essential sign system, capable of becoming a repository of vast accumulations of meaning and experience which it can then preserve in time and transmit to following generations. Further, it is language that reifies experience--moves it from a subjective apprehension to an objective one, a necessary transformation if a culture is to exist. In stabilizing individual subjectivity it stabilizes the world by making it "real." In other words, language makes our world and allows us to communicate within and about it. Language is central to the social construction of reality.

From here it follows, then, that Canada does not exist as a place in time, in space, in history, until it is created in and by language. And, as we might well expect, that creation is

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[24] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 89.

particularly difficult in a fragment culture. If we consider the pause, the silent stillpoint in that migration from a place to nowhere and a culture to nothing, we can see that the concept of social construction applies fundamentally here. The problem is, of course, that the conditions of the zero point extend past the liminal phase. The movement away from the stillpoint, from absence to a named order, involves importing and setting up social structures originating with the founding European cultures. However, the social structures that were secure in Europe have very little to sustain or justify their presence in Canada, and the conceptual machineries of universe-maintenance[25] are problematic when the base structure that the social construct is supposed to reflect is insecure, invisible, or absent. Public, civil, and colonial space is radically in question in this kind of culture.

The nature of human being comes into question in a new world that is nowhere, in a way of being that makes one no one, in an invisible world with invisible people in it. The peculiar predicament of the new world is the moral and metaphysical imperative of retaining or replacing givens, of accommodating the content of different histories into a relationship with each other while maintaining an equilibrium in a world that threatens to disintegrate under the extreme pressure of that activity. George Grant calls this profound alienation the break from Europe, and

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[25] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 104.

points up the sense of migration and not belonging that is characteristic of the experience: "It [the continent] could not be ours in the old way because the making of it ours did not go back before the beginning of conscious memory."[26] Making it ours involves making it mean: speaking it into existence.

That act of speaking a world into existence requires an understanding of its ontological status. In The Invention of America, Edmundo O'Gorman argues that North America is a mental construct and could not have been discovered:

> ...the fault that lies at the root of the entire history of the idea of the discovery of America consists in assuming that the lump of cosmic matter which we now know as the American continent has always been that, when actually it only became that when such a meaning was given to it, and will cease to be that when, by virtue of some change in the current world concept, that meaning will no longer be assigned to it.[27]

The land mass west of what was then called the Island of Earth had no meaning in itself until it was given one within the context of history: "neither things nor happenings are something per se: their being (not their existence) depends on the meaning given to them within the framework of the image of reality valid at a

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26 George Grant, Technology and Empire: Perspectives on North America (Toronto: Anansi, 1969), p. 17.

27 Edmundo O'Gorman, The Invention of America: An inquiry into the historical nature of the New World and the meaning of its history (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1961), p. 42.

particular moment."[28] This distinction between being and existence is crucial. Columbus was so convinced that it was the Asian continent he had reached that, despite a lack of evidence, he adjusted his data to conform to his a priori opinion:[29] he not only constructed his own reality, and the European attitudes and language about North America and its natives which were current for centuries, but denied the existence of what was actually there. He took six "Indians" back to Europe to be taught "to speak": their discourse registered as an absence of language, as silence. The native North American culture had to be reworked into European discourse for it to signify as anything but absence. As Shakespeare put it at the time that Europe was expanding with its discoveries of new worlds: "Brave new world/ That has such people in't! 'Tis new to thee."[30] In Shakespeare's new world play Caliban is colonized by language: as his place is invaded he loses control because he is outside the dominant discourse. The issue of language makes him and Prospero live out the middle passage as exile and alien respectively, a comment on our condition as Europeans here.

This ontological perspective--the recognition of a process that produces historical entities rather than assumes their prior existence--explains in part the European attitude toward the

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[28] O'Gorman, The Invention of America, p. 51.

[29] O'Gorman, The Invention of America, p. 80.

[30] William Shakespeare, The Tempest, V, i, 183-4. My emphasis.

native population, which it eradicated or marginalized. In Tzvetan Todorov's terms, by naming or translating the new world into his own sign system, Columbus not only identifies but takes possession of it.[31] Cortés extends the act and takes possession of its inhabitants as well by assuming the power of life, or more often death, over them. The very fact of America's existence as an entity in its own right was a challenge to the whole body of European traditional assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes.[32] Again, the fact of that existence had to be translated to become intelligible within the European system of signification.

The problem in settling and in writing about the new world of North America, then, is a problem of intellectual accommodation and structuration, of dealing first with its ontological status and then with the framing of a coherent discourse for it and of it. As Terence Hawkes puts it, the colonist's activity is much like a dramatist's: "[a colonist] imposes the 'shape' of his own culture, embodied in his speech, on the new world, and makes that world recognizable, habitable, 'natural,' able to speak his language." The meaning of the experience and material is shaped

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[31] Tzvetan Todorov, The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other, 1982, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 27.

[32] J. H. Elliott, The Old World and the New 1492-1650 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 8.

and ordered in language.[33] The tension in that activity in the new world is one that Henri Baudet discerns. If, as he says, culture exists on the two levels of a real or imagined remembrance of a past existence and an actual experience,[34] then shaping an order, an understanding, a language from those two contradictory and opposed levels within a fragment culture is practically impossible. The reality of the country is posited against the idea of it.[35] The reality of Canada is problematic: the forest does not tell Richardson who he, or Wacousta, is; the water does not reflect the image of Atwood's Moodie; the birds are songless in Alexander McLachlan's forest; in Douglas Le Pan's poem this is a country without a mythology.

History and memory are crucial to a new world society because they provide the content for its structures. The new world carries a burden of silence and, for the European, absence. Its literature exists in this doubly removed condition as well, with the imperative of salvaging from that condition a kind of

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[33] Quoted in Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century," in First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old, ed. Fredi Chiappelli, Michael J. B. Allen, and Robert L. Benson, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976), II, p. 569. My emphasis.

[34] Henri Baudet, Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts On European Images of Non-European Man, 1959, trans. E. Wentholt (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 75. My emphasis.

[35] This is an issue George Lamming [The Pleasures of Exile (London: Michael Joseph, 1960)] and Doug Owram [Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900 (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1980)] have discussed in different contexts.

presence, an activity which must be in and of language. Existence, either personal or social, is not guaranteed by place; in this new place neither is secured by history or meaning. When the United States removed itself from the discourse of time it became a mythic place and defined itself as the new Eden. The place that the American hero, both literary and popular, keeps advancing into is an unrealized, indefinite space with no connection to reality or community to anchor it.[36] The Canadian act, in contrast, has not been to create itself from nothing but to use fragments of structure and content from elsewhere and to attempt to fill the gaps with inventions. This process of accommodation is apparent in the works of the authors examined in this study. I am looking at the writing of Major John Richardson, Frederick Philip Grove, Sheila Watson, and Robert Kroetsch because in various ways they are positioned at the pause, the silent stillpoint, the zero degree. They question--radically--the nature of place, this place, and the nature and possibility of human being in it.

Richardson attempts to establish that relationship in Wacousta as he sets his forts in forest clearings and transfers the British military order to the new world and into a dialogue with its natives. He has difficulty making that combination mean, since his attention and imagination are distracted by howling savages, hollow squares and trees, and a dishonoured European who

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[36] Naim Kattan, "Space in the Canadian Novel of the West," trans. Joyce Marshall, Ariel, 4, no. 3 (July 1973), p. 104.

has gone Indian. Grove, too, tries to make a reconciliation between his European past and his new life in Canada. His new world men, though, are ciphers for the sociological, ethical inquiries into generalized human nature which are all he can manage.[37] In The Double Hook Watson's figures reconstruct a language out of European and native traditions and attempt to find a meaning in human being as they do so. Kroetsch's work extends the process: he puts Canada into discourse by using language as place and making meaning out of the doubled relationship of language and place, both of which function as site. His version of the new world moves from the idea of discovering to that of invention. His writing is engaged in putting our place into discourse, our country into literature, our being into reality.

Each of the writers studied here is exploring the question which Kroetsch puts directly: how do you make love in a new country? Which means, how do you establish a social place here? How do you make a relationship between people and place in a huge, blank, landscape--in absence? And how do you write--and of what--in Canada? The social and cultural construction of Canada involves building structures of self and family, kinship and community--a social arrangement, an authentic relation between structure and content, a discourse as Michel Foucault would have it, a problem in language. The necessity is to establish a

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[37] J. J. Healy, "Grove and the Matter of Germany. The Warkentin Letters and the Art of Liminal Disengagement," Studies in Canadian Literature, 6, no. 1 (1981), p. 171.

meaningful social discourse in a way that is authentic, as natural as "growing a prairie town," in a culture which has experienced the phenomena of migration and occupation.

In a new world society such as Canada, the givens are seen to be constructs first, and perhaps most clearly, in literature. Richardson and Grove are in a very real sense travelling in foreign countries: their fiction alerts us to their out-of-place position. For Kroetsch, the founding of a prairie town is the creation of the world. In language and out of language we, and our writers, construct our culture and effect human significance, just as Watson's figures in The Double Hook articulate their relation to ground and make their words and their community mean. The questions that Watson's and Kroetsch's works raise are no less valid or significant when directed at texts by Richardson and Grove, although the late twentieth century provides a language and conceptual framework that was not available to Richardson and Grove in their times. Because we have been alerted to particular conditions by Watson and Kroetsch, we are able to see the same conditions shaping earlier works: we too have lacked the necessary language and conceptual framework. It is fitting enough that it is our western writers who have given form to a new order of inquiry, into both our literature and our culture: perhaps the less secure and intact the constructs, the more acute the vision and imagination.

In his "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology" Northrop Frye states that the Canadian poet's quest is for form--the shaping

principle--rather than content.[38] Another way of addressing this concern is to shift the terms: the "shaping principle" is the discursive system, the conceptual structure that makes language signify at a second level. The Canadian writer is looking for a way to shape material so that content and structure, language and discourse, relate and mean. That is what these writers do: express the reality of here and make language mean in this cultural context. The conflict between content and form shows in their work. Richardson fights against the conventions of the historical romance and breaks them--often. He will not and cannot do what that genre requires: when he bursts out of it we see not only the rupture of the literary form, but the precarious structure of the new world as well. He must not only enter discourse, by definition meaningful, but enter an authentic discourse. He does not see the problem in these terms, indeed does not have the language to do so, but his life and works are a demonstration of his repeated and failed attempts to connect to the new world, which haunts his imagination. The problem of form is more complex for Grove because the crux of his personal and new world situation is his own identity and because theories of the self have, by the early twentieth century, become quite complex. His work divides uneasily into the prairie novels--the study of the new world man--and his autobiographical works in which he

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[38] Northrop Frye, "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology," 1956, The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), pp. 176-177.

discovers America and "himself." As both an old world and new world man and as a writer profoundly interested in the human condition, Grove experiences liminality both personally and intellectually. He is situated permanently in the liminal phase; only his personal energy can release him at all, and only temporarily. Watson's perception and treatment of formal issues are coloured by her modernism. She focusses on the manner in which language can both deny and grant meaning; in The Double Hook she uncreates and re-creates an authentic form for the expression of Canada. Her figures move out of meaningless speech composed of fragments of the mass, native mythology, and the Old Testament and into silence; they eventually enter discourse as they re-create the relationship between signifier and signified. The text is informed by Watson's belief that language means; its tension is the tension between that belief and her temptation to push language beyond its limit to silence, where meaning in language is not possible. Kroetsch deliberately and directly addresses questions of form and of the fictional nature of literary reality which are compounded by the Canadian context. It is no accident that Jeremy comes to Canada to go Indian: the blank northwest is where miracles and transformations of being and discourse are still possible. Jeremy's existence is totally determined by language; when his tapes stop he stops too. In Gone Indian and in his poetry Kroetsch makes language, rather than this continent or the socio-historical reality of Canada, his place.

When we move away from the literal place we can locate the theories of environmentalism and regionalism that have preoccupied Canadian critics and theorists. Their attention has been on place, but on literal rather than ontological place. Kroetsch and Watson have the means of accommodating that perception; Grove understood the issue but was hampered by the problematic existence of his "I," while Richardson had no means of intellectually accommodating the questions that the new world raises. Of course the translation from this level of abstraction to fiction or poetry is difficult. Grove and Watson are determined to make that translation, and do so with varying success, while Kroetsch seems equally determined not to. He is negotiating the fascinating place between[39]--the middle passage--with great dexterity, but with significant risk as well. "I was still a man, I had to talk" echoes beyond the seal herd:[40] he cannot give up his humanness or his speech, and neither can we. The discourse will continue as long as the culture does: speaking and being, on literal and abstract levels, are a condition of our condition, perhaps more intensely here in a fragment society than elsewhere. Perhaps

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[39] Russell M. Brown, "An Interview with Robert Kroetsch," University of Windsor Review, 7, no. 2 (Spring 1972), p. 16. This is also the title of Rosemary Sullivan's article in Mosaic, 11, no. 3 (Spring 1978), pp. 165-76.

[40] Robert Kroetsch, "How I Joined the Seal Herd," in Field Notes: The Collected Poetry of Robert Kroetsch (Don Mills: General, 1981), p. 73.

not--the poet could still be killed crossing the road[41]--but if so, at least the land and the traversing of it will be marked.

[41] Robert Kroetsch, "Seed Catalogue," in Field Notes, pp. 58-59.

TWO: RICHARDSON

ON THE BRIDGE

Reading the work of John Richardson raises a number of questions about his style, content, and literary ability. The most pressing question, however, is the reason for the difference between his first two novels, written in Europe, and his work written in or set in North America. His first novel, Ecarté; or, The Salons of Paris[1] is perhaps, just that--a first novel. The plot is repetitive, the characterization sometimes awkward, and the action stilted. It does, however, have many of the elements which reappear in his later works: the theme of gentlemanly honour and its betrayal, an enthusiasm for sexual relationships, abundant military personnel, and some elements of the romance. The second novel, Frascati's; or, Scenes in Paris[2] is much more successful. The unified consciousness of the protagonist, Rambleton Morris, is indicative of the unity of the work. Rambleton's rambles in Paris, observing the English at play and collecting material for his projected book about his travels although he has been advised that the market demands an historical novel, are humourous and entertaining. Rambleton's perception is keen, about both his travelling companions and the gambling

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[1] 1829.

[2] 1830.

British, although he is less perceptive about himself. Richardson's plot and characters are under control in Frascati's; we see a number of alliances and misalliances, as well as young men gone wrong and righting themselves, all presented with grace and humour. The work ends with Rambleton's consciousness again guiding our conclusions, along with some remarks from this author-protagonist about literary pursuits.

Richardson's work changes abruptly when we move from his two European novels to those of the new world. Wacousta; or, The Prophecy. A Tale of the Canadas[3] is written shortly after the European works, after which time Richardson's literary career is interrupted by military activity. His return to Canada is followed by the publication of Wacousta's sequel, The Canadian Brothers in 1840. During the 1840's Richardson wrote journalism and vainly attempted to establish himself in Canadian society. His last works, The Monk Knight of St. John and Westbrook, the Outlaw! or, The Avenging Wolf were published in the early 1850's, shortly before his death. The most striking aspect of Richardson's North American works is the difficulty he has holding them together. His language, historical context, and literary tradition do not fit his new world experience, and he is left mixing elements of Gothic romance with violent pornography. In Wacousta characterization is uneven and inconsistent, the plot is complex, and one senses acutely that Richardson is in danger of

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[3] 1832.

losing control of his material. As the savages drop shrieking from the trees and the military formation moves backwards into the fort we know that something has gone sorely wrong in Richardson's universe. The tension at points in the work is inappropriate to the events, while its silences drop as heavily, and loudly, as those same savages.

Richardson's problem in Wacousta and his other North American works is one of language and structure, of content and context. His experience does not fit with the literary conventions he tries to use. Frascati's and to some extent Ecarté succeed because he knows what he is writing about, and because his material fits into his literary models. Not so in North America. The experience of the war of 1812 is Richardson's own, and he is able to transpose that to the Ponteac[4] rebellions rather neatly. What is not so neat, however, is the accommodation he attempts between that material and the new world Gothic romance/adventure novel/Indian novel, with all the divergent themes of love gone wrong, honour betrayed, the nature of the new world natives, and the undeniable violence of the confrontation between the European and the wilderness of North America. In Wacousta Richardson's preoccupations centre on disorder, upheaval, trauma, and violence. He attempts to control that disorder by imposing upon it the formations of kinship and the military, but those structures fall apart before the threats of the competing

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[4] I use Richardson's spelling of Ponteac and Michillimackinac.

orders of the Indian tribes and the forests surrounding the Great Lakes. Richardson's literary skills are not up to the challenge; his language betrays him.

Richardson tries to use kinship and the military order as structures in which to frame his North American experience in fiction. His treatment of family emphasizes emotional coldness and lack of communication, while his attention to romantic relationships quickly centres on homosexuality, voyeurism, miscegenation, violence, and rape, elements which figure largely in The Monk Knight and Westbrook. The plots, characters, and ideas he brings from the Gothic novel and from Scott's historical romances simply do not function when they are displaced.[5] Similarly, his ideals of military men and behaviour and of civilized human nature go awry in the North American context and are similarly sensationalized: the fort commander is a tyrant, the military court-martial is, in fact, a murder, and the savagery of a British officer surpasses that of the natives of North America.

Wacousta's plot centres on the conflict between Wacousta and the De Haldimar family. The original incident is De Haldimar's betrayal of a fellow officer, Reginald Morton (later Wacousta), in Scotland. When the conflict is transferred to North America

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[5] For a discussion of Richardson and Scott see David Richards, "Nineteenth-Century Scottish and Canadian Fiction: The Examples of Sir Walter Scott and Major John Richardson," in Re-visions of Canadian Literature, ed. Shirley Chew (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1984), n. pag.

Wacousta's planned revenge has grown to include De Haldimar's children, his brother and his child, and the British garrisons at Détroit and Michillimackinac. The conflict between individuals has changed registers and become a war between races and cultures. The roles within the De Haldimar family are replicated in the public order: the two sons, Frederick and Charles, are officers under their father's command, while the daughter is named after her mother and is very like her. The younger Clara, in fact, becomes the focus of Wacousta's revenge when he determines to make her his bride in place of her mother, who disappeared with De Haldimar on the eve of their wedding. Richardson does not analyze the relationship between De Haldimar and his wife, or her participation in Morton's betrayal. He does look closely, however, at the relationships between De Haldimar and his children.

Richardson presents the Colonel as a cold, strict, and official man who has apparently replaced the natural terms of affection between himself and his sons with the formal terms of the military:

> Much of the despotic military character of Colonel de Haldimar had been communicated to his private life; so much, indeed, that his sons,--both of whom, it has been seen, were of natures that belied their origin from so stern a stock,--were kept as great a distance from him as any other subordinates of his regiment. But although he seldom indulged in manifestations of parental regard towards those whom he looked upon rather as inferiors in military rank, than as beings connected with him by the ties of blood,

> Colonel de Haldimar was not without that instinctive love for his children, which every animal in the creation feels for its offspring. He, also, valued and took a pride in, because they reflected a certain degree of lustre upon himself, the talents and accomplishments of his eldest son....As for Charles,--the gentle, bland, winning, universally conciliating Charles,--he looked upon him as a mere weak boy, who could never hope to arrive at any post of distinction.... [6]

After Frederick has left the fort to spy on the Indian camp, De Haldimar appears to be more concerned with exerting military discipline, which means executing Frank Halloway for his apparent complicity in Frederick's mission, than in allowing that Frederick's absence is for good reason and puts him in considerable danger. The Colonel's relationship with Charles appears to be no closer, at least until he believes his other children are dead: he does not comfort Charles when it appears that Frederick has been shot by Charles' closest friend Valletort, while a scene in the Colonel's apartments shows that Charles has been trained to communicate with him as a military subordinate rather than as a son:

> Charles de Haldimar felt all the awkwardness of his position. Some explanation of his conduct, however, was necessary; and he stammered forth the fact of this portrait having riveted his attention, from its striking resemblance to that in his sister's possession.

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[6] Major John Richardson, Wacousta; or, The Prophecy. A Tale of the Canadas, 3 volumes (London: T. Cadell, 1932), III, pp. 147-148. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in the text.

> 'And to what do these letters bear resemblance?' demanded the governor in a voice that trembled in its attempt to be calm, while he fixed his penetrating eye on that of his son. 'They, it appears, were equally objects of attraction with you....'
>
> '...I am here, my father, on a mission of importance, which must account for my presence.' (III, 77-78)

Clara's resemblance to her mother, on the other hand, causes De Haldimar to dote "on his daughter with a tenderness, for which few, who were familiar with his harsh and unbending nature, ever gave him credit" (III, 148-149).

The uncommonness of De Haldimar's relationship with his children is echoed in Charles', Clara's, and Frederick's relationships with each other, and in their romantic alliances. The triangular relationships and suggestions of homosexuality and incest in the text have been noticed by several critics,[7] and point up Richardson's fascination with ordering structures, particularly as they go wrong. Charles and Sir Valletort are extremely close and devoted; when it appears that Valletort's shot into the shadows has killed Frederick their distress and grief are intense and, in Charles's case, almost debilitating. Their closeness is apparent in their relationship with each other and in their attitude toward Charles' sister, Clara. Charles wishes

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[7] These critics include John Moss, Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel: The Ancestral Present, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) pp. 88-90; Robert A. Lecker, "Patterns of Deception in Wacousta," Journal of Canadian Fiction, no. 19 (1977), pp. 77-85; and Michael Hurley, "Wacousta: The Borders of Nightmare," in Beginnings: A Critical Anthology, ed. John Moss (Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1980), pp. 60-69.

desperately that his adoration of his sister be shared by Valletort, and he courts him with descriptions of his sister's beauty and character. Valletort is only too willing to be seduced via Charles and swears his love for Clara before he has met her: " 'Enough, De Haldimar; I will no longer doubt my own prospects. If she but approve me, my whole life shall be devoted to the happiness of your sister' " (I, 197). Charles apparently benefits since he and Valletort can love each other through the mutually beloved Clara:

> 'Oh, Valletort, Valletort! this is, indeed, all that was wanting to complete my happiness. My sister Clara I adore with all the affection of my nature; I love her better than my own life, which is wrapped up in hers. She is an angel in disposition,--all that is dear, tender, and affectionate,--all that is gentle and lovely in woman; one whose welfare is dearer far to me than my own, and without whose presence I could not live. Valletort, that prize,--that treasure, that dearer half of myself, is yours,--yours for ever. I have long wished you should love each other, and I felt, when you met, you would....Valletort,' he concluded, impressively, 'there is no other man on earth to whom I would say so much; but you were formed for each other, and you will, you must, be the husband of my sister.' (I, 194)

Valletort and Clara happily acquiesce. The situation is a milder and more sentimental version of what occurs in The Monk Knight of St. John when Arthur forces Abdallah, the knight sworn to chastity, to marry Arthur's wife in the event of his own death. When Arthur is reported dead Abdallah abides by the agreement, and although he and Ernestina swear that their lovemaking can only be

completely fulfilling when the name of the supposedly dead man is on their lips, they are not so willing to admit the live Arthur into the triangle when he reappears. In Wacousta Richardson makes clear that Valletort loves both Clara and Charles for the same qualities:

> Never had Charles de Haldimar appeared so eminently handsome; and yet his beauty resembled that of a frail and delicate woman, rather than that of one called to the manly and arduous profession of a soldier....The light brown hair flowing in thick and natural waves over a high white forehead; the rich bloom of the transparent and downy cheek; the large, blue, long, dark-lashed eye, in which a shade of languor harmonised with the soft but animated expression of the whole countenance,--the dimpled mouth,--the small, clear, and even teeth,--all these now characterised Charles de Haldimar; and if to these we add a voice rich, full, and melodious, and a smile sweet and fascinating, we shall be at no loss to account for the readiness with which Sir Everard suffered his imagination to draw on the brother for those attributes he ascribed to the sister. (I, 192)

Clara's physical resemblance to her brother appears to be sufficient attraction for Valletort.

Clara and her cousin Madeline also have a close and intense relationship. After they suffer the siege and attack on Michillimackinac together, Clara is rescued and taken to safety in the schooner where she falls into a catatonic state from the shock of the attack and Madeline's apparent capture by the savages. Madeline, meanwhile, is safe and floats out to the schooner hidden

in an Indian canoe. The passion of the women at their reunion is extreme, while their principal men look on:

> With the keen rush of the morning air upon her brow returned the suspended consciousness of the bewildered Madeline. The blood came slowly and imperceptibly to her cheek; and her eyes, hitherto glazed, fixed, and inexpressive, looked enquiringly, yet with stupid wonderment, around. She started from the embrace of her lover, gazed alternately at his disguise, at himself, and at Clara; and then passing her hand several times rapidly across her brow, uttered an hysteric scream, and threw herself impetuously forward on the bosom of the sobbing girl; who, with extended arms, parted lips, and heaving bosom, sat breathlessly awaiting the first dawn of the returning reason of her more than sister. (III, 13)

Madeline has been rescued by her lover's lover, Oucanasta. The Indian maiden betrays her own people to help her European lover save himself and the garrison at Détroit, although it is clear that their relationship can have no future. In saving Madeline she earns the lifelong gratitude of Frederick, and wears Madeline's ring when Madeline and Frederick are officially betrothed. In Richardson's conclusion she is continuing her friendship with the man she loves and his family:

> Time rolled on; and, in the course of years, Oucanasta might be seen associating with and bearing curious presents, the fruits of Indian ingenuity, to the daughters of De Haldimar, now become the colonel of the ____ regiment; while her brother, the chief, instructed his sons in the athletic and active exercises peculiar to his race. (III, 371)

While titillating the reader with the suggestion of a sexual relationship between Frederick and Oucanasta, Richardson shows that their union is impossible. Unlike many of his historical counterparts, Frederick is too much of a gentleman to exploit Oucanasta, and a public, permanent relationship is forbidden by their respective cultures. Oucanasta selflessly realizes the impossibility of an inter-racial marriage and sacrifices her own happiness for Frederick's. She agrees to save Madeline for his sake:

> He [Frederick] rose from the log, dropped on one knee before the Indian, seized both her hands with eagerness, and then in tones of earnest supplication whispered,--
>
> 'Oucanasta is right: the pale girl with the skin like snow, and hair like the fur of the squirrel, is the bride of the Saganaw....What says the red girl? will she go and save the lives of the sister and the wife of the Saganaw.'
>
> The breathing of the Indian became deeper; and Captain de Haldimar fancied she sighed heavily, as she replied,--
>
> 'Oucanasta is but a weak woman, and her feet are not swift like those of a runner among the red skins; but what the Saganaw asks, for his sake she will try....The pale girl shall lay her head on the bosom of the Saganaw, and Oucanasta will try to rejoice in her happiness.'
>
> In the fervour of his gratitude, the young officer caught the drooping form of the generous Indian wildly to his heart; his lips pressed hers, and during the kiss that followed, the heart of the latter bounded and throbbed, as if it would have passed from her own into the bosom of her companion.
>
> Never was a kiss less premeditated, less unchaste. Gratitude, not passion, had called it forth; and had Madeline de Haldimar been near at the moment, the feeling that had impelled the seeming

> infidelity to herself would have been regarded as an additional claim on her affection. On the whole, however, it was a most unfortunate and ill-timed kiss, and, as is often the case under such circumstances, led to the downfall of the woman. In the vivacity of his embrace, Captain de Haldimar had drawn his guide so far forward upon the log, that she lost her balance and fell with a heavy and reverberating crash among the leaves and dried sticks that were strewed thickly around. (II, 186-188)

Frederick indeed has Oucanasta off balance and treats her as a romantic European hero would his heroine, while she betrays herself by an extremely unlikely fall over a log, a most literal downfall. Richardson is saying much here about the relationship possible between the two cultures.[8] The friction between the two races is brought to a crisis by Wacousta, the European who has gone Indian and is living out his idea of the North American savage. The model of European culture is the collection of skewed relationships within the De Haldimar family. Frederick's and Madeline's marriage, the one union that appears to have a future, remains strictly within the limits of that family and of the British military system.

Richardson also attempts to use the military order as a structural model for the developing European society in North America. That order, however, shows itself to be bankrupt. The

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[8] He is also saying much about himself: David Beasley, his biographer, states that Richardson's maternal grandmother was an Ottawa Indian. Liaisons and marriages between native women and white traders and settlers were not uncommon, although Richardson would seem to deny that possibility, at least to someone of Frederick's class.

fort at Détroit, under the command of Colonel de Haldimar, is vulnerable and insecure. Although Douglas Cronk argues that the imbalance of De Haldimar's character is a function of the editing of the text,[9] Richardson shows the Colonel to be morally corrupt in his betrayal of Reginald Morton in Scotland, and mistaken in his authoritarian and inflexible attitude toward both his children and his men, which causes him to make the wrong decisions and to take the wrong actions. The men watch in silence as their commanding officer tricks Frank Halloway into confessing to his part in Frederick's disappearance with a promise of amnesty, and then orders him executed him for treason:

> The prisoner started. 'What!' he exclaimed, his cheek paling for the first time with momentary apprehension; 'is this voluntary confession of my own to be turned into a charge that threatens my life? Colonel de Haldimar, is the explanation which I gave you only this very hour, and in private, to be made the public instrument of my condemnation? Am I to die because I had not firmness to resist the prayer of my captain and of your son, Colonel de Haldimar?'
>
> The president looked towards the governor, but a significant motion of the head was the only reply; he proceeded,-- (I, 133-134)

De Haldimar's judgement and decisions are wrong, but within the system he cannot be opposed, either by his men or by his sons, who are also his military subordinates. The men resent the harsh and

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9 Douglas R. Cronk, "The Editorial Destruction of Canadian Literature: A Textual Study of Major John Richardson's Wacousta: Or, The Prophecy," M. A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1977.

unnecessary rebuke Valletort receives for firing at the enemy:

> This severe reproving of an officer, who had acted from the most praiseworthy of motives, and who could not possibly have anticipated the unfortunate catastrophe that had occurred, was considered especially harsh and unkind by every one present; and a low and almost inaudible murmur passed through the company to which Sir Everard was attached. (I, 76)

Their dissatisfaction is masked, however, as it must be, and while Valletort's friendship with Charles causes him to forgive the injustice, his "mind is made up" to "resign or exchange" (I, 78) his posting as soon as possible. Frederick also disagrees with his father's judgement, and actually disobeys his orders when he leaves the fort to gain the information necessary to save it.

The corruption inside the fort filters down from the commanding officer to cause dissatisfaction and disobedience among the men, and to shake their confidence in themselves and the British military system they represent. The fear and confusion inside the fort is palpable, and reality is indistinguishable from imagination: "De Haldimar looked again.--'I do begin to fancy I see something,' he replied; 'but so confusedly and indistinctly, that I know not whether it be not merely an illusion of my imagination' " (I, 49). In the opening chapter the shouts in the dark, the intruder within the fort, and the shots fired at shadows underline the fact that the British garrison's attempt to control the new world setting with military order is a failure. When the troops go outside the fort to recover the body at the dugout and

to execute Frank Halloway at the bridge, the men are exposed and vulnerable, and in terrible danger not from a recognized enemy, but from the real or imagined threat which might be lurking beyond the edges of the forest surrounding the fort and its island of cleared space. Their imagination makes that threat worse and allows the Indian enemy to assume Wacousta's "powerful proportions and gigantic stature" (I, 144) and become a "legion of devils" (I, 85). When they are outside the fort the troops are commanded into the hollow square formation, an unwitting symbol of the garrison's lack of substance; when they are not in the square they are ordered to march backwards. Richardson makes the most of one such scene in which the troops attempt to regain the fort:

> Taking advantage of the terror produced, by this catastrophe, in the savages, Captain Erskine caused the men bearing the corpse to retreat, with all possible expedition, under the ramparts of the fort. He waited until they got nearly half way, and then threw forward the wheeling sections, that had covered this movement, once more into single file, in which order he commenced his retreat. Step by step, and almost imperceptibly, the men paced backwards, ready, at a moment's notice, to reform the square.... From this [the bomb-proof] a falling fire, mingled with the most hideous yells, was now kept up; and the detachment, in their slow retreat, suffered considerably. (I, 112-113)

A few steps further Donellan's body rolls off the stretcher and the men struggle to save it and themselves. Frank Halloway is sentenced inside the hollow square when his defence is disbelieved and his account of his history and identity discounted:

> Again the governor interposed:--'What possible connexion can there be between this man's life, and the crime with which he stands charged? Captain Blessington, this is trifling with the court, who are assembled to try the prisoner for his treason, and not to waste their time in listening to a history utterly foreign to the subject.'
>
> 'The history of my past life--Colonel de Haldimar,' proudly returned the prisoner, 'although tedious and uninteresting to you, is of the utmost importance to myself; for on that do I ground the most essential part of my defence.' (I, 147-148)

The telling of one's honourable history and military record would, of course, be an appropriate defence if the military system was functioning in accordance with its own codes, which it is not.

As a construct to impose and preserve meaning, De Haldimar's military strategy is inappropriate and inadequate to its task: he can neither defend the fort and the men, nor allow the set of common understandings among military personnel to be recognized. The failure of the military system was, I suspect, a surprise to Richardson. That system should have made the North American experience of a British soldier--Richardson's own experience--intelligible, but it does not. The breakdown of the military model he records corresponds to the breakdown of discourse that Richardson encountered when he tried to write about the new world. Richardson's language simply is not right: when he calls the cleared area around the fort "a common, or description of small prairie" (I, 19), we know that he has not accommodated the North American landscape, or his audience--this from the man who is so

precise with historical and geographical details that he painstakingly defends his shortening and narrowing of the Sinclair River for the purposes of his plot.[10]

Richardson can give us the literal details of the setting and landscape, but he has difficulty understanding and communicating just what those literal details mean. Figuratively speaking, the bridge over the river where Halloway is executed, Clara is thrown, and Charles and Wacousta die represents the impossibility of bridging the gap between the North American indigenous culture and the European culture without horrific amounts of conflict and bloodshed, if it is possible at all. The characters in the work who die there do indeed fall into the chasm, but Richardson is teetering on its edge as well. He is determined to shape his Canadian material into a form given him by a ritual revenge plot, type characters, and prescribed action, but his literary conventions had never previously been required to deal with content so far beyond the bounds of the familiar and the understandable. For Richardson, and for other early Canadian writers, this formal dilemma is most critically encountered in fiction. Canadian nature was not Nature: the dual allegiance to seventeenth-century neo-classical order and eighteenth-century scientific empiricism resulted in description and narration

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[10] Introduction to the 1851 edition, quoted in the introduction to the McClelland and Stewart 1967 revised edition, xviii. This is Richardson's spelling of St. Clair in Wacousta.

tending in opposite directions. Barbara Godard cites Richardson, as well as Moodie and Traill, in her argument that the creation of unclassifiable baroque forms in early Canadian fiction is evidence of the tension between experience and training.[11] Moodie and Traill abandoned fiction, while Richardson's grew increasingly out of control.

Richardson's language cannot support the absolute horror he feels as he realizes the void and silence that he, and British North America, are facing. The imminent annihilation of the two British forts in Wacousta has far greater consequences than the loss of military advantage and a number of British lives. The presence of the British is less firm than the possibility of their absence, and of the non-being to which British North America and Richardson himself will be subject if the European presence which lends it intelligibility disappears.

Absence figures largely in Wacousta. The Colonel is essentially absent from a relationship with his family or as a figure to inspire trust and respect in his men. When Frederick leaves the fort he disappears into absence and invisibility: he is beyond the limits of military behaviour for disobeying his commander's orders, feared dead, assumed killed by Valletort's shot, absolutely gone from human intercourse when outside the

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[11] Barbara Thompson Godard, "The Colonial Dilemma: Conflicting Immigrant and Native Attitudes to Nature in Early English-Canadian Fiction," in Proceedings of the 7th International Comparative Literature Association, vol. I, ed. Milan V. Dimić and Juan Ferraté (Stuttgart: Erich Bieber, 1979), p. 115.

ramparts. Of course he spends that time in the forest, wrapped in an Indian blanket, and hidden in a hollow tree--further layers of invisibility and absence that he must impose on himself to gain access to the Indian camp and some knowledge of the other culture. Wacousta has some striking absences as well. As he changes races and continents, he is lost to the view of the culture he leaves behind: the humiliated and court-martialled Reginald Morton disappears from the British military and social realm to become a Scottish renegade. When he reappears in North America to fight for the French and makes an attempt on Frederick's life on the Plains of Abraham, he has been lost to his former life without yet possessing the possibility of moving on to another; at his transformation into the Indian warrior his stature has increased and his skin darkened, somewhat akin to the Irish giant Moodie sees leaping about the rocks at Grosse Isle.[12] Needless to say, his name has changed with his identity.

The most prominent absences in Wacousta are suffered by Frank Halloway and his wife, Ellen. While Frederick is wrapped in the hollow tree in the forest Frank Halloway stands in the centre of the hollow square and defends himself against the charge of treason, not simply by relating the events of the previous night when Frederick left the fort but by recounting the history of his previous life under his previous name. In his defence he cites

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[12] Susanna Moodie, Roughing it in the Bush; or, Forest Life in Canada (1852; rev. ed. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), p. 27.

his honourable birth, the respectability of his family, and his loyal and honourable treatment of Ellen, whom he insisted on marrying although it meant the loss of his position and name. When they are forced to leave their homes, stripped of income and identity, the reborn Frank Halloway joins the military as a means of earning a living and preserving some decency and honour in a suddenly disorderly life. His record in military service is exemplary--he deliberately takes a shot intended for Frederick--although Colonel de Haldimar, his social if not his military equal, ignores Frederick's recommendations that he be promoted.

Halloway's defence is intended to give him visibility and intelligibility but it does not, because the prevailing power structure will not recognize it. Halloway speaks into a void where his words do not mean because the frame of discourse he uses for his defence is not seen by the power which could grant its meaning. The result is that Halloway himself follows his words into the void of nonbeing. His execution takes place <u>outside</u> the fort--his uniform seized, his wife ordered to remain inside the fort, his obviously reasonable request for delay until Frederick's imminent arrival ignored. The things which gave an intelligible meaning to Frank Halloway are taken from him, just as that which had functioned similarly for him as Reginald Morton had been earlier removed. His physical death is anti-climactic, although Richardson plays it out in a dramatic scene:

> 'Corporal, do your duty.'
> 'Stay, stay--one moment stay!'
> implored Halloway with uplifted hands.

> 'Do your duty, sir,' fiercely repeated the governor.
> 'Oh stop—for God's sake, stop! Another moment and he will be here, and I—'
> He said no more—a dozen bullets penetrated his body—one passed directly through his heart. He leaped several feet in the air, and then fell heavily, a lifeless bleeding corpse, across the coffin. (I, 272)

Halloway disappears from North America, just as Reginald Morton had from England; the difference is that the North American disappearance is physically fatal.

Ellen Halloway figures as an absence throughout the text, and her significance extends further than that of her husband. She too suffers the loss of family connection and belonging on her removal from her home and, with Frank, takes a fictitious name. However, her situation is much more complicated in North America than her husband's, for his unjust trial and execution take place within the structure of meaning he has chosen. Ellen, in contrast, never enters a structure of meaning in North America. The original dislocation from her place and her identity becomes permanent as she fails to reconnect to any other context: "I am not Ellen Halloway: they said so; but it is not true. My husband was Reginald Morton: but he went for a soldier, and was killed; and I never saw him more" (III, 177). The resulting damage, then, is permanent and irreversible. Ellen is truly between worlds as one of a number of anonymous and invisible military wives living inside the fort. Richardson does not look at them—no writer of his generation would have. He does, however, record that her

"long fair hair" and "polished bosom" are "displayed" when she throws herself at De Haldimar's feet to beg for her husband's life. Not surprisingly, De Haldimar ignores her entreaties:

> Vexed and irritated beyond measure, at being thus made a conspicuous object of observation to his inferiors, the unbending governor made a violent and successful effort to disengage his leg; and then, without uttering a word, or otherwise noticing the unhappy being who lay extended at his feet, he stalked across the parade.... (I, 216-217)

Ellen disguises herself as the drummer to accompany the procession out to the bridge where the execution is to take place, and as it proceeds and the sentence is pronounced, her desperation is intense (I, 258-259). Although she can do nothing to stop the proceedings, she is at least present:

> 'My Ellen! oh, my own devoted, but too unhappy Ellen!' passionately exclaimed the soldier, as he clasped the slight and agitated form of his disguised wife to his throbbing heart. 'This, this, indeed, is joy even in death. I thought I could have died more happily without you, but nature tugs powerfully at my heart; and to see you once more, to feel you once more here' (and he pressed her wildly to his chest) 'is indeed a bliss that robs my approaching fate of half its terror.'
>
> 'Oh Reginald! my dearly beloved Reginald! my murdered husband!' shrieked the unhappy woman; 'your Ellen will not survive you. Her heart is already broken, though she cannot weep; but the same grave shall contain us both. Reginald, do you believe me? I swear it; the same grave shall contain us both.' (I, 259)

In a very real sense Ellen does not survive her husband.

Richardson depicts Ellen as an hysteric in her distress: her shrieks startle, her hair streams, she runs frenziedly and totters despairingly. All of which may be more or less classic behaviour for a woman of sensibility in such a situation. What is not classic, however, is what happens to her after Halloway is executed. Richardson detaches her from the British North American society she has been on the fringes of when she leaps on top of Halloway's coffin and declares a curse upon De Haldimar and his descendants:

> 'Inhuman murderer!' she exclaimed, in tones that almost paralysed the ears on which it fell, 'if there be a God of justice and of truth, he will avenge this devilish deed. Yes, Colonel de Haldimar, a prophetic voice whispers to my soul, that even as I have seen perish before my eyes all I loved on earth, without mercy and without hope, so even shall you witness the destruction of your accursed race. Here--here--here,' and she pointed downwards, with singular energy of action, to the corpse of her husband, 'here shall their blood flow till every vestige of his own is washed away; and oh, if there be spared one branch of thy detested family, may it only be that they may be reserved for some death too horrible to be conceived!' (I, 278)

By this action she steps, metaphorically at least, into Wacousta's camp, withdrawing herself from the garrison and its representatives, whom she condemns, and pledging herself to revenge. Like Wacousta, Ellen has "gone Indian," moving distinctly out of the European context and the limits it understands and imposes on behaviour into something unknown and, to the British North Americans, empty--empty of reason,

intelligence, rules, morality. She has moved out of the frame of discourse in which Richardson and his readers could understand her. All Richardson can do with Ellen after she has fallen backwards into Wacousta's arms and been carried off is have her go mad. In Wacousta's tent in the forest she is withdrawn and incoherent: "Her eyes were large, blue, but wild and unmeaning; her countenance vacant; and her movements altogether mechanical" (III, 169). The madness Richardson projects onto her is his way of understanding and expressing the fact that she is no longer of this world. His insight is accurate but his explanation less so, although it is the only one available to him.

Ellen's reaction is clearly not the result of white womanhood's violation by a savage, but of the accumulation of violent displacements and dislocations she has experienced. Her confusion is produced by the intermingling of two irrational worlds.[13] Her absence, first from her old world home, then from European society in the new world, is both literal and figurative. She disappears into the forest with Wacousta, the epitome of the savage, just as she had disappeared from her personal and social position in Britain when she married and her name was changed. In fact she is absent from the text the moment Wacousta carries her off and only reappears when Richardson turns his gaze on Wacousta's tent because Clara is in it, about to be raped. In that scene Ellen is secondary since our attention, and

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[13] Lecker, "Patterns of Deception," p. 83.

Richardson's, is focussed on Clara and Wacousta. In what we do see of Ellen, however, she has clearly rejected her identity as a European woman acting within the bounds of her culture. When Clara tries to steal her knife to cut Valletort's bonds, Ellen prevents her by grasping the blade, apparently feeling neither Clara's desperation to escape or the cuts in her own hands. Ellen declares her loyalty to her new husband in that action, although Wacousta does not return the sentiment. That declaration makes her the enemy of the Europeans and a savage in their eyes, as Wacousta has become. After this scene Ellen is again absent and unmentioned, with no one to speak for her, until the last line of the novel: "As for poor Ellen Halloway, search had been made for her, but she never was heard of afterwards" (III, 371).

Richardson was obviously fascinated by this strange creature he created, and could not finish the work without at least a passing reference to her: the ending of the novel gives her character a status that is not consistent with her position in the rest of the work. It is true that until her kidnapping by Wacousta she is reasonably enough developed as a secondary character. After her disappearance, however, Richardson does not even approach what could have been an extremely important subject for him and a telling part of the novel. His vision of the accommodation of the European to the new world culture is blocked by his preconceptions of the place and the people. Wacousta the warrior is a stock character, and terribly European despite his disguise--the scene in the tent with Clara is ample proof. In

Wacousta's alternation between the new world savage and the old world Reginald Morton, Richardson shows that his character's identity is not firmly in place:

> There was a cool licence of speech--a startling freedom of manner--in the latter part of this address, that disappointed not less than it pained and offended the unhappy Clara. It seemed to her as if the illusion she had just created, were already dispelled by his language, even as her own momentary interest in the fierce man had also been destroyed from the same cause. She shuddered; and sighing bitterly, suffered her tears to force themselves through her closed lids upon her pallid cheek. This change in her appearance seemed to act as a check on the temporary excitement of Wacousta. Again obeying one of these rapid transitions of feeling, for which he was remarkable, he once more assumed an expression of seriousness, and thus continued his narrative. (III, 219)

Wacousta's silences between his idealizing of Woman and the violence of his intentions toward Clara point up the gaps Richardson encounters when he attempts to write of the British North American wilderness. Between Wacousta's conflicting identities as the wronged man of honour and the ignoble savage, and between the systems of discourse he uses, is the silence Richardson falls into when he has no fitting form for the experience. Is Richardson saying that one cannot leave the old world behind--or that one cannot become a part of the new world? What is most revealing is that Wacousta remains a gentleman. He does not rape Clara: the threat is what is necessary for the suspense in the text. He remains bound by the old world

conventions of honour: indeed, that is what informs his revenge quest against De Haldimar.

Ellen, however, is not so easy for Richardson to categorize. Her intense loyalty to each Reginald Morton when she is with him is consistent with Richardson's ideas of female character, but the situation goes awry when one of those Mortons appears to have changed his identity and loyalty. To be loyal to Wacousta, Ellen must act against another European woman: she attempts to prevent Clara's escape. This act against her culture and her sex introduces new ambiguities, which Richardson avoids by avoiding Ellen. She must reappear at the end of the work to make the plot consistent, furnish appropriate suspense, and prepare for the sequel. Her position, however, remains really unexplained and unexamined: her madness is a convenient way for Richardson to get out of a position which he cannot maintain or understand. Ellen is left as the ghost in Wacousta, and figures much more largely in her absence than I suspect Richardson realized or intended.

The absences in Richardson's text are linked to silence. Richardson's silences occur in the gaps between the forms he wants to use and the experience he wants to express and are pointed up, paradoxically, by noise: when savages shriek or guns crack we know that meaningful language is absent. The rattle of guns, cries of Ellen, and shrieks of the savages as they pursue Frederick mark the absence of meaning which attends dishonourable acts and the fall into disorder when the troops scramble to maintain their defence and return to the fort. The device most

closely corresponding to the absence and silence in Richardson's text is disguise. Richardson's characters sometimes cannot speak because they do not know who they are. As Ellen moves from daughter to wife to widow to concubine, her identity crumbles and she falls into silence. Ellen's disguises also change her sex, when she masquerades as the drummer boy accompanying her husband's execution. Wacousta's silences fall between the conflicting systems of discourse he tries to use in his simultaneous presentation of himself as the wronged Reginald Morton and the Indian renegade. Frederick wears his subordinate Donellan's clothing when he leaves the fort at night, which leads to a further confusion of identities when Donellan is discovered dead in Frederick's uniform. Frederick disguises himself in the dark, in a blanket, inside a tree, all to hide his presence and reinforce his silence. Two Claras are confronted by Wacousta in two oases; there are two forts, two miniatures, two Reginald Mortons, two perilous quests out of the ordinary civilized realm of order and common sense across a border abyss--as Michael Hurley puts it, through the looking glass.[14]

The proliferation of disguises and double identities is Richardson's means of expressing his awareness of the possibility of personal and social disintegration in the new world. The transition from old to new world undoes certain things in the human psyche: one is the ability to use language legitimately;

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[14] Hurley, "The Borders of Nightmare," p. 65. Hurley further identifies the numerous parallels in plot and character.

another is the ability to retain a coherent identity. The necessity of maintaining coherence is even more crucial when the European ways will not function and there is no alternative order. The individual's struggle to maintain identity has a parallel in the community at large, where the search for symmetry is seen as a search for cultural order.[15] As identity and reality become ever more difficult to discern, the moral ambiguities of the new world experience are pointed up. The lines between the two worlds of good and evil waver and fade as characters blur into one another and each culture is seen to have its own strengths and weaknesses. It becomes increasingly difficult to tell which is the realm of order and which chaos, while good and evil are problematic and highlight the contradictory tensions inherent in the new world.[16]

The European concept of human nature is another problem of definition and potential disintegration in Richardson's new world. Richardson blurs the boundaries between nature and civilization, noble and savage, primarily in the figure of Wacousta. The nature of the noble savage, embodying the tension between the noblest qualities of the Christian and the non-Christian, between primitivism and archaism, and between nature and convention appeared in European thought with reference to the negro and Muslim before being applied to the aborigines of North America. The Indians, as the Europeans called them, although the tribes of

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[15] Lecker, "Patterns of Deception," p. 183.

[16] Hurley, "The Borders of Nightmare," p. 67.

North America did not call or understand themselves as a collectivity,[17] were a surprise to Europe and constituted a theological difficulty regarding their origins and their exclusion from the blessings and benefits of the Christian revelation.[18] The myth of the noble savage encouraged a reworking of the classical myth of the Golden Age rather than an understanding of the North American way of life. The North American native had to be translated into a European system of values and norms, and informed the central question of the early literature about America: what is human nature?[19] The "wild man" and the "noble savage" functioned as metaphors to identify things that resisted conventional systems of classification, a crucially necessary function when a culture encounters something that eludes normal expectations and experience.[20] The wild man characteristically exhibits an absence of speech: American Indian languages did not function as discourse in the European frame because the civilized Europeans could not understand them. Thus the Indians shaded into

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[17] Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), p. 3.

[18] John H. Elliott, "Renaissance Europe and America: A Blunted Impact?" in First Images of America, ed. Chiappelli, Allen and Benson, vol. I, p. 18.

[19] Aldo Scaglione, "A Note on Montaigne's Des Cannibales and the Humanist Tradition," in First Images of America, ed. Chiappelli, Allen, and Benson, vol. I, p. 65.

[20] Hayden White, "The Noble Savage Theme as Fetish," in First Images of America, ed. Chiappelli, Allen, and Benson, vol. I, p. 122.

the subhuman, since the presence of language distinguishes human from animal.[21] When the native does learn the imperial language, it is apt to be, as in Caliban's case, a curse. As Francis Jennings puts it, "to call a man savage is to warrant his death and to leave him unknown and unmourned."[22] This naming not only denies the history of the native culture and of the place, which makes it a truly new world, but makes the natives become the whites' image of them.[23] The glorification of the noble savage influenced European expansion, particularly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but did not stop the massacres or economic exploitation.[24] The increasingly historical orientation of the nineteenth century drew European thought away from its attraction to the romanticism and exoticism of the unknown, embodied in the person of the savage; the image of wildness was fictionalized and became an instrument of intracultural criticism.[25] Certainly Richardson's example of a civilized culture, the British in North America, undercuts that culture's assessment of its own virtues:

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[21] Stephen J. Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse: Aspects of Linguistic Colonialism in the Sixteenth Century," in First Images of America, ed. Chiappelli, Allen, and Benson, vol. I, p. 567.

[22] Francis Jennings, The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 12.

[23] Berkhofer, The White Man's Indian, p. 195.

[24] Baudet, Paradise on Earth, p. 54.

[25] Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness," in The Wild Man Within: An Image in Western Thought from the Renaissance to Romanticism, ed. Edward Dudley and Maximillian E. Novak (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), p. 31.

there isn't much right with that culture. One of its members must, in fact, leave it to obtain the redress which his own culture should, but does not, deliver. Although Wacousta is obsessed with revenge, it is revenge within the definition and limits of European culture.[26] He is not a savage, noble or otherwise, at all.

Eventually all of the principal European characters in the work with the exception of Frederick and Madeline disappear--into either the gorge or a grave. Richardson leaves the problem of race relations in Frederick's and Madeline's hands, and apparently we are intended to feel some confidence in their ability to bridge the two cultures: Oucanasta remains present as a valued friend of the family along with her brother, while the rest of the Indians have melted into an anonymous and affable mass. The European position, however, is actually extremely precarious. Throughout the novel Richardson has used the bridge joining the banks of the river and the Indian and British territories to show just how impossible any interaction except war will be. Attack, death, and murder all occur there, along with many of Richardson's heightened

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[26] Richards points out that De Haldimar's betrayal of Morton, which provides the plot of the novel and causes Morton to transform himself into a savage, occurs when the British army is attempting to control "wild Highlanders" in Scotland. In the chapters of Wacousta that Richards cites, Richardson does not refer directly to the nature of the British campaigns, but makes several references to "the disturbed nature of the times." Richards discusses the conceptions of the savage and the civilized, and the language used to treat each group, and how those conceptions enter works by Scott and Richardson. (David Richards, "Nineteenth Century Scottish and Canadian Fiction," n. pag.)

effects: horrible shrieks, threats and curses, the wolf dog licking up Frank Halloway's brains. The bridge is not a scene of peaceful meeting between the races, and the meetings which occur elsewhere are indicative of inability and unwillingness to communicate.

The gap between the military and the Indians is attended by misunderstanding and distrust. During the meeting in the council chamber the Indians speak laboured English and bring a war pipe to smoke with the British, while De Haldimar conceals his armed men behind drapes. The conversation is stilted and awkward, not only because these chiefs are not fluent in each other's ways of speaking, but because they do not know what to say to each other and Richardson cannot imagine what they would say. Both parties are intent on concealing their real motives and their planned betrayal of the other: communication is used deliberately to obstruct understanding. De Haldimar, by styling himself as chief of the Saganaws, makes a mockery of his own principles and the principles of the natives who are, after all, defending their territory's sovereignty. Neither side speaks effectively or truthfully--each is planning strategies and counter strategies which their words are meant to conceal. On the lake in front of Michillimackinac before the attack, one of the "friendly" savages attempts to pass a message to the sleeping soldier in the boat but the beaver disguise is not recognized, attempted murder is suspected, and communication fails. When Frederick goes to the Indian camp his purpose is to spy on the warriors and discover

their strategy so it can be thwarted by the British. The historical failure to close the vast gulf between the immigrant and indigenous mentalities is figured by the tomahawk in the British corpse on the bridge.[27]

Frederick and Madeline are left presiding over a very precarious peace: Richardson does not follow up the European/Indian conflict, not because it has been resolved, but because he must continue the revenge plot. Further, if the Indian culture were to be taken seriously it would have to be seen and presented as an alternative to the white. Richardson is not interested in introducing that kind of ambiguity into his text. Although he is clearly criticizing white values and actions, his comments are personal rather than historical; historical comments would have been against his own experience and would have risked alienating his audience. Making the Indian backdrop anything more than it was would have been complex, as well as a violation of the premises of popular culture.[28] However flawed the white culture, the native culture was not, in nineteenth-century North America, a suitable alternative: European culture then, as in Columbus' time, could not be expected to deny itself. Like Moodie, Richardson fears the breakdown of the social order and can see an ideal in neither group. Oucanasta and her brother are not typical

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[27] Hurley, "The Borders of Nightmare," p. 62.

[28] Berkhofer, The White Man's Indian, p. 98. Even in James Fenimore Cooper's novels, the native culture is not embraced as an alternative to the white.

representatives of the Indians or effective intermediaries because they have been working for the Europeans against their own people throughout the work: Richardson seems to be denying even the possibility of reconciliation between the opposites of wilderness and civilization.[29] His Indians are able to use English to make themselves perfunctorily understood to the British, but barely, while the Indians' comprehensible discourse and culture are not recognized: Wacousta explains that "[t]here are certain figures, as you are aware, that, traced on bark, answer the same purpose among the Indians with the European language of letters" (III, 335). Like Caliban, the natives are both colonized and excluded by language.[30] As representatives of the other culture, Frederick remains a military man, with the interests of his men and his empire to consider first, and Madeline, one assumes, has retained her interest in gathering Indian artifacts. Richardson's optimism regarding the future at Détroit is consistent with a happy ending for his novel. That ending, however, is not entirely consistent with the situation he has presented. And in the meantime Fort Michillimackinac has been burned to the ground and the British presence on the upper lakes removed. Richardson concludes the novel by leaving a large threat to his Europeans. When he writes

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[29] Gaile McGregor, The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Langscape (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 8-9. McGregor argues that such an intermediary character is standard in the wilderness romance, and points out that Leatherstocking takes this role in the work of James Fenimore Cooper.

[30] Lamming, The Pleasures of Exile, p. 15.

The Canadian Brothers, the lives of his principal characters are no more secure but this time the threat comes from other Europeans,[31] while the natives and their culture have been diminished to interesting conversation pieces at the dinner table of the commander of Niagara.

Richardson has great difficulty assimilating the difference between the settled European place he experienced in his adulthood, and North America--unsettled, unspoken, un-understood. His problem is particularly acute because he is born in a new world where social value is determined in many cases by old world connections. He is implicated in the colonial relationship and what Robertson calls the experiences of the Great Frontier--migration and occupation--discussed earlier.[32] When Robertson quotes from Frank Sargeson's "The Making of a New Zealander"--"...but he knew he wasn't a New Zealander. And he knew he wasn't a Dalmatian any more. He knew he wasn't anything any more"[33]--the description could well be that of a British North American born in British North America in the late eighteenth century--that is, John Richardson himself. Richardson clearly shows the symptoms of migration. He is one of the migrating culture which is trying to make itself at home in the new land and is born too

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[31] The Granthams' enemies are Americans, both in the public order, in the War of 1812, and in the private realm where the descendants of Wacousta and Ellen Halloway act to fulfill the curse.

[32] Robertson, "My Own Country," p. 77.

[33] Robertson, "My Own Country," p. 77.

soon, before that culture has placed itself. Consequently he and others like him are left in free fall or, as Robertson puts it, the harrowing of hell.[34] Richardson is at a double disadvantage because although he is not firmly attached to the new culture in the new place, neither does he have memories of a former place. Even his period in England and the ultimate failure of his attempt to become part of British military and social life shows that he could not join the parent culture, nor could he make a life in Canada when he returned. Richardson is both exile and alien, and, as such, participates in the literary problem of articulating Canada. Richardson writing on his western frontier, and Kroetsch on his, are both experiencing essentially the same problem.

Richardson and nineteenth-century British North America were caught in the historical process which prevented a full accommodation to the place or the time. Neither the author nor the developing nation could successfully create what Dick Harrison calls "an imaginative framework to point the order and keep out the chaos."[35] Clearly Richardson was not able to keep the chaos out of Wacousta. Although Harrison states that the problem of the

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[34] Robertson, "My Own Country," p. 78.

[35] Dick Harrison, "The Beginnings of Prairie Fiction," Journal of Canadian Fiction, 4, no. 1 (1975), p. 176. See also Harrison's Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977), particularly chapter I, "Eastern Eyes: The Problem of Seeing the Prairie," pp. 1-44. McGregor argues a similar point in The Wacousta Syndrome: that conventionalizing the landscape not only allows the convention to shape the viewer's response and limits literary expression, but also impairs the ability to come to terms with the actual environment (pp. 33-36).

new land and old culture is not peculiar to the prairie, he argues that it is more acute in the extreme topography and climate of western Canada. I would argue that although the prairie evokes a particular reaction, it is the violence of the first collision of European sensibilities with the new world per se which causes a physical and a psychic disorientation, in eastern as in western Canada. Richardson had no models for his experience and no language for its expression. If, as Edward Sapir states, speech is not an inherent biological function of the human but the historical heritage of the group and the product of long-continued social usage,[36] Richardson's problem in articulating his experience is not so surprising.

That argument is reinforced if we agree with Berger and Luckmann that reality is socially constructed by the human consciousness[37] in language, which accumulates, preserves, and transmits the meaning and experience of that society to the following generations. When language does not function, the social construction faces disintegration. If the social order is an ongoing human production which exists only as a product of human activity,[38] the maintenance of the society depends upon a number of people being actively engaged in it and communicating

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[36] Edward Sapir, Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1921), p. 2.

[37] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, pp. 1-3.

[38] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 52.

through a mutually understood sign system; it also depends on the existence of institutions, which imply historicity and control.[39] When the members of that society are no longer reminded that the institutional world which they perceive as objective reality is simply a product of their own activity, which will occur when that society is removed from its historical context, the stage is set for the extreme dislocation of Hartz's fragment cultures.[40] Since human beings are capable of producing a world that they then experience as something other than a human product,[41] the result can be disastrous when they are faced with the necessity of consciously constructing their social reality, either in changed circumstances or in a changed place. Neither things nor events are something in themselves: "their being (not their existence) depends on the meaning given to them within the framework of the image of reality valid at a particular moment."[42] That placing of meaning or construction of reality must take place in language. As noted earlier, a colonist acts as a dramatist and imposes the shape of his own culture, embodied in its speech, on the new world

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[39] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, pp. 54-55.

[40] See Hartz, The Founding of New Societies and "Violence and Legality in the Fragment Cultures."

[41] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 61.

[42] O'Gorman, The Invention of America, p. 51.

and makes that world recognizable, habitable, and natural--able to speak his language.[43]

If viewed within this theoretical framework, it is clear that Richardson reacted in a quite comprehensible manner upon finding himself within a fragment of European culture transplanted to the new world. He was unable to see his situation within the framework of the historical process, nor did he realize that art (in this case literature) does not reflect nature but contemporary thought structures.[44] Richardson is working almost completely within the modes of order of his culture, which give intelligibility, coherence, and meaning to his work in his own eyes and in the eyes of his contemporaries. His rigidity about what he allowed into and what he kept out of his work is typical of the cultural dogmatism of fragment cultures. The problematic incidents in the text occur where those modes of order are not yet in place. In Dennis Lee's terms, for Richardson (and Canadians) "home" is ambiguous: "[t]he colonial writer does not have words of his own."[45] In our own time we understand what Robert Kroetsch means when he talks about archeological investigations of language

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[43] Terence Hawkes, quoted in Greenblatt, "Learning to Curse," in First Images of America, ed. Chiappelli, Allen, and Benson, vol. II, p. 569.

[44] Michel Foucault, quoted in The Sociology of Literature: Theoretical Approaches, ed. Jane Routh and Janet Wolff, Sociological Review Monograph 25 (Keele, Staffordshire: University of Keele, 1977), p. 10.

[45] Dennis Lee, "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space," Boundary 2, 3, no. 1 (Fall 1974), p. 162.

and the necessity to uninvent the erroneous and imposed language before we re-invent our own for ourselves.[46] The undermining silence beneath the words the colonial powers have given us is present, from Richardson to Kroetsch. Language is our means of socialization, and the initiation into our own culture. If our language is absent or impaired, our ability to experience the world it is supposed to constitute is as well. We are able to see different things in Richardson's work than he or his contemporaries could, not simply because of our more sophisticated theoretical framework, but because our institutional conventions in the 1980's are different than Richardson's were in 1832. In both centuries we are implicated in ideology--historical, political, literary.

The constructs Richardson has at his disposal are simply inadequate for the confrontation of the old and new worlds. When he encounters something that he does not know how to deal with he either transforms it into another issue or remains silent. Much of the gunfire, shouted orders, war whoops, and dialogue in Wacousta is simply ritual according to the conventions at his disposal. More important is the way he deals with incidents which cannot be ritualized. Ellen Halloway disappears into silence and absence. Wacousta disappears into the chasm, literally and figuratively. Many people simply die, while the (French)

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[46] See my discussion of Kroetsch below.

Canadians[47] are largely ignored. The revenge plot takes over from what could have been an examination of the attempts at cultural integration in the new world. In the sequel, The Canadian Brothers, the Indians are loyal supporters of the British military and the conflict is between the fragments of the two European societies transplanted to North America. The savage element is provided by another white man gone Indian, the offspring of Wacousta and Ellen.

In his North American works Richardson is continually caught between the Americans to the south, the British North Americans in Upper Canada, and the natives, with a few "Canadians" thrown in for relief. His problem is not only how to sort out those relationships, as the participants themselves were trying to do by fighting wars and declaring political unions, but how to sell his books in that political climate. The editorial revisions of Richardson's works have been detailed by Cronk, who makes the point that changes were made to Wacousta's American editions for political rather than literary reasons: British spellings were amended to American, references to "our" became "their", and sections were cut which were complimentary to the British or critical of the Americans.[48] These changes, of course, destroyed the integrity of Richardson's text and point up not only the

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[47] In Wacousta "Canadians" refers strictly to white settlers of French ancestry.

[48] Cronk, "The Editorial Destruction of Canadian Literature," chapter III, "An American Spoliation," pp. 58-118.

problems of the Canadian publishing industry and of Canadian authors in marketing their work, but the political situation Richardson was facing in the early nineteenth century.[49] Like Frank Halloway, he chose the British military for a career and discovered the inadequacies of its structure.

The permeating absence of structure that Lecker discerns in Wacousta[50] is no less critical in the existence and idea of the new world at the time Richardson's works are set. Much of Richardson's difficulty in controlling Wacousta has to do with the setting. The problem of assimilating European characters into a new world landscape is real when one's language, historical context, and literary tradition do not fit the experience which is to be shaped into literature. Richardson has difficulty placing his characters of sensibility on the frontier, and we watch their actions and characteristics become slightly skewed: the sighs and distresses of sensitive young ladies become the passionate embraces and wordless groans of Clara and Madeline when they are re-united on the schooner after the attack at Michillimackinac; the friendship and loyalty between two gentlemen suggests a homosexual relationship which is further complicated when Charles attempts to displace his affection for his sister by arranging an alliance between Clara and Sir Everard. The social framework for these characters goes awry as well as the military order

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[49] See Richardson's Chapter I, "Introductory," in the 1832 edition of Wacousta.

[50] Lecker, "Patterns of Deception," p. 77.

Richardson places in the new world is hollow and invalid: Sir Everard is severely reprimanded by the Colonel for performing his duty by firing at the enemy, and Halloway's execution is a miscarriage of justice, military or civil.

Richardson attempts to transfer characteristics, if not physical details, of the old world landscape to the new. The most obvious parallel is between the Scottish highland oasis and the Indian camp. Clara Beverly is secreted in the rocky oasis to protect her from the outside world and to keep her innocence intact. The oasis is violated by a man, Reginald Morton, who wishes to take her from that hiding place. Her father's plan for her life, then, motivated by his misanthropy, is foiled and she leaves the oasis in Morton's arms. As soon as she reaches the outside world, however, she betrays him by succumbing to De Haldimar's seduction and helping him to destroy Morton's career and reputation. The oasis did not provide Clara Beverly with a strength of character or a moral code that could be trusted. It gave Morton the opportunity to fulfill a Herculean test, but he does not get the reward. The oasis is also not far removed from ordinary society: Morton first finds it during an afternoon of hunting and is able to return to it frequently following his daily duty, and even the old servant woman can negotiate the passage through the rocks to the town below. It is more the scene of a sojourn than a permanent withdrawal from the world. In contrast, the forest setting of Wacousta is not a place these British gentlepeople are visiting, with plans to return to their homes.

They are here, although they may not know where that here is. The lake and the Sinclair River which lie before the fort at Michillimackinac are not a shining portal through which the Europeans trapped there can return to their own world (II, 237), although they (and Richardson?) seem to think so. Further, the Europeans do not see the order, shape, and definition of the Indian camp in the forest, another "oasis" and another fort. When Wacousta, Frederick, Ellen, Clara, and Valletort disappear into the forest they are lost to the view of the people in the British fort and enveloped in chaos, where only the worst and most unimaginable things can happen. The natives are presented as clicheed savages--popping out of the bomb shelter, shrieking across the plain, dropping from the trees onto the deck of the schooner--rather than as members of a planned and coherent community:

> With the general position of the encampment of the investing Indians, the reader has been made acquainted through the narrative of Captain de Haldimar. It was, as has been shown, situate in a sort of oasis close within the verge of the forest, and (girt by an intervening underwood which Nature, in her caprice, had fashioned after the manner of a defensive barrier) embraced a space sufficient to contain the tents of the fighting men, together with their women and children. This, however, included only the warriors and inferior chiefs. The tents of the leaders were without the belt of underwood, and principally distributed at long intervals on that side of the forest which skirted the open country towards the river; forming, as it were, a chain of external defences, and sweeping in a semi-circular direction

> round the more dense encampment of their followers. (III, 165-166)

For Richardson this hidden and enclosed space would seem to compare with the place in the Highlands, as is evidenced by his choice of "oasis" to describe them both, but he does not continue the comparison.

Richardson and Wacousta are dramatic examples of the impossibility of a culture's attempt to articulate its meaning in literature when that meaning is not yet constructed and in place. Wacousta, the most successful of Richardson's novels, threatens to unravel before his and our eyes because of the peculiar circumstances in which it is written. His personal and social world is radically in question, as was British North America at this time in history.[51] He falls silent or deflects the reader's attention away from problematic subjects not because he does not want to deal with them, but because he cannot. Possessing neither the structural nor historical framework to accommodate the fundamental questions of the new society, he lacks the language in which those questions could be posed. In support of her argument that the form the artist imposes on the raw material and the way the raw material composes itself are determined by the cultural milieu, Gaile McGregor quotes from Roland Barthes:

> [T]he choice of, and afterwards the responsibility for, a mode of writing

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[51] Here and in The Canadian Brothers, Britain, the United States, and the natives are competing for control of North America, and France has recently been defeated. The loyalty and national designation of the settlers are divided.

> point to the presence of Freedom, but this freedom has not the same limits at different moments of history....It is not granted to the writer to choose his mode of writing from a kind of non-temporal store of literary forms. It is under the pressure of History and Tradition that the possible modes of writing for a given writer are established.[52]

Richardson is very much under the pressure of history and tradition.[53] As Dennis Duffy says, Richardson "lets the reader view the extremes of fear, the profound sense of the lawless and uncontrolled nature of the universe that can compel man to erect a social order that stresses civility, decorum and deference."[54] The novel is a rite-of-passage search for values in a valueless wilderness where reason can no longer be trusted. Cultural annihilation is a primary anxiety in Wacousta.[55]

Richardson takes his position on the bridge--between cultures, identities, realities. In his world, horror has to be

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[52] Barthes (Writing Degree Zero + Elements of Semiology, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith resp. [joint ed. Beacon Press 1970], p. 16), quoted in The Wacousta Syndrome, p. 11.

[53] John Thurston makes a similar argument regarding Susanna Moodie and Roughing It in the Bush. He holds that the generic instability of Roughing It results from Moodie's inability to find a form to contain her Canadian material, and that problems of form contribute to and reflect upon problems of language ("Re-Writing Roughing It," presented at the Literary Theory and Canadian Literature Symposium, Ottawa, 27 April 1986).

[54] Dennis Duffy, "Major John Richardson: The Loyalist in Disguise," in Gardens, Covenants, Exiles: Loyalism in the Literature of Upper Canada/Ontario (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 44.

[55] Margot Northey, The Haunted Wilderness: The Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 80.

viewed with detachment to save sanity.[56] He tries to adopt the stance of detached observer and narrator, as Madeline similarly collects the handicrafts of the Indians and admires their culture from a distance, because he is too close to the action and the experience. If forced into contact, his shock would be as great as hers is. The North American experience remains discontinuous and inexplicable until, as an observer, Richardson has distanced himself from what he has seen and thereby fit it into some larger pattern of meaning, be it historic or symbolic.[57] Standing on the bridge, Richardson's stance is shaky: the bridge is the precarious footing of Canadian frontier society for which, as Margot Northey puts it, European ways seemed patently unsuitable and inadequate, and native primitivism represented a terrifying alternative.[58] Richardson's new world never contains within it the possibility of Eden. In his universe the old world resumes its conflicts in the new, which is a dismal prison in comparison with fondly-remembered Europe.[59]

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[56] Duffy, "The Loyalist in Disguise," p. 46.

[57] Duffy, "The Loyalist in Disguise," pp. 51-53. Duffy argues further that the observer stance leads him into voyeurism, with its spying and masking, as he wishes to participate but is stopped by his fear of the act. This is Richardson's method of detachment, which he usually employs when he is dealing with sex or violence.

[58] Northey, The Haunted Wilderness, p. 25.

[59] L. R. Early, "Myth and Prejudice in Kirby, Richardson, and Parker," Canadian Literature, no. 81 (Summer 1979), p. 31.

Richardson remains fascinated by the borderline: between honourable and dishonourable conduct, natural and unnatural sexual relations, human and animal nature, civilization and wilderness.[60] Richardson constantly pushes against the limits of the way things were understood--and written--in his time, but when he gets beyond those limits he is unsure of his direction and is apt to swerve into the excesses of Westbrook and The Monk Knight. He is mired in the middle passage, stranded between a familiar, comprehensible order and a new world whose horrors figure only vaguely in his imagination, and are therefore all the more terrifying: "When the eye turned wood-ward, it fell heavily, and without interest, upon a dim and dusky point, known to enter upon savage scenes and unexplored countries" (II, 237) [my emphasis]. Richardson does not really know what lies within the forest. Like the schooner on the Sinclair River, he must negotiate an extremely circumscribed passage: if he hesitates, or deviates to either side, the surrounding unnamed and unknown terrors will overcome him. His characters remain in that middle passage with him, and his novel about the new world can show only the extreme precariousness of European society there. Richardson, and British North America with him, cannot make the transition from Europe to North America. In Europe the structures of meaning retain content and visibility: the only "horrors" in his European works are losses of honour and

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60 McGregor locates Wacousta, and Richardson, on the "interface between civilization and the wilderness...precisely on the line where those two realities and two states of mind come together" (McGregor, The Wacousta Syndrome, p. 3).

reputation caused by transgressions against a rigid social order. When those structures of meaning are transported and set down in the fragment culture in North America they sustain nothing. They could not be used as a basis on which to build a new society which would mirror the old because the new world demanded their radical interrogation, with their resulting collapse.

THREE: GROVE

RE-INVENTING THE SELF

Like Richardson, Grove was faced with the imminent collapse of structures of meaning in the new world. His negotiation of the middle passage is extended since the self he is trying to integrate into the new world society is not the self which existed in the old world. He is, in fact, attempting a personal transformation in mid-passage; we have already seen in Richardson's case that the transition is difficult enough without the complication of a doubled name and a denied history. The zero degree of humanity experienced in the suspension between cultures threatens to become permanent for Grove: he has erased Felix Paul Greve and the persona of Frederick Philip Grove that he has created in its place is in constant danger of disintegration. Grove's Canadian writing, particularly his autobiographical works, speak more of him than they do of Canada, despite his reputation as Canada's major prairie realist. He determinedly and repeatedly writes himself and what he conceives to be his place into existence: the alternative is silence and absence. His autobiographical act is doubly metaphoric: the act, and the texts it produces, constitute not a self but a metaphor of self.[1]

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[1] Paul John Eakin discusses the metaphoric nature of autobiography with regard to James Olney in Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 227.

The invention of the new world was more complex for Grove than it was for Richardson, for Grove was confronted with the necessity of creating a private self as well as a social place. Grove's peculiar position without a name or an identity save that of his own making required that his construction of the new world be personal and social, and that the process be both conscious and foregrounded. His crisis of person and place is apparent in his autobiographical works, A Search for America and In Search of Myself, the account of his journeys in Over Prairie Trails, and the pioneer novels, such as Our Daily Bread. His mixing of genres, within the autobiographies and within his corpus, is indicative of the mixed mode in which he was living and working. His life in the new world is a complex fiction in which a curious doubling of his two official identities, Greve and Grove, occurs repeatedly. Grove's necessity, laden with ironies, is to retain control over the Greve life: he denies that former existence, but repeatedly draws on it for the history of the newer version of himself. And it is apparent from our knowledge of his life as Greve that even the so-called "real" past he draws upon in Europe is largely of his own creation;[2] that is, his sense of being an established member of European social and literary circles

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[2] Douglas Spettigue's research shows that Grove's account of Grove's European past is different from Greve's life in Europe. See Douglas O. Spettigue, FPG: The European Years (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1973).

demonstrates his passionate need rather than cool possession.[3] The ironic results of this curiously doubled doubling are apparent throughout his Canadian writings.

Grove's study of self and the external world, both the landscape and the social place, are central to his writing and his life--he was involved in that examination on both public and private levels for as long as he is known to have been in Canada. His sense of personal identity is so fragile that it requires constant reinforcement and takes much of his energy: it is naturally the subject of his North American writing because it is in writing and in being a writer that his identity is consolidated. Grove's attention repeatedly focusses on the building of an identity which he appears to need to distinguish from non-human nature and to place within the context of a shared humanity. The acuity of his problem with individual identity, the shifting "I" of his writings, shows in his work. His determination to distinguish the individual from non-human nature causes his painstaking delineation of wind and waves, farms and roads, fog and snow, in Over Prairie Trails. The isolated "I" must, however, express itself in relations with other humans: kinship relations figure prominently in the novels.

Grove explains his situation with remarkable accuracy and detachment in A Search for America:

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[3] J. J. Healy's phrase in "Literature, Removal and the Theme of Invisibility in America: A Complex Fate Revisited," Dalhousie Review, 61, no. 1 (Spring 1981), p. 133.

> When I came from Europe, I came as an individual; when I settled down in America, at the end of my wanderings, I was a social man. My view of life, if now, at the end, I may use this word once more, had been, in Europe, historical, it had become, in America, ethical.[4]

When Grove left his life in Europe, the highly specific individuality and past disappeared and he was left with a universalized human being in an abstract, ahistorical setting. He ceased to be an individual: the intact, coherent identity supported by past and place was replaced by a proposition.[5] In the negotiation of the middle passage he left behind his past, his future, his sense of himself as a member of a society, his personal and social connectedness. In the new world he scrambles quickly to reconstruct those kinds of connections to people and place: he marries soon after his official arrival in Canada[6] and assumes the respectable and visible community position of teacher and high school principal. His attempted connections to society are not quite successful, partly due to his feelings of isolation and failure as a writer. The social self is difficult for him to create and maintain, much less to connect to his imprecise and imperfect notions of the place in which he has landed. His

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[4] Frederick Philip Grove, A Search for America: The Odyssey of an Immigrant (1927; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 382. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in the text.

[5] J. J. Healy, "Grove and the Matter of Germany. The Warkentin Letters and the Art of Liminal Disengagement," Studies in Canadian Literature, 6, no. 1 (1981), p. 171.

[6] His marriage to Catherine Wiens took place in August 1914.

difficulty is intensified by the fact that he is constructing himself and a past around a fiction: the narrative of his life is built around a fictitious person and past, surely a doubled act of self-invention. Grove is not simply engaged in the process of personal development, an activity he has in common with all human beings, but is constructing a new personality and a new narrative at the same time as he suppresses the "real" self.

America, for Grove, is abstract. Individuality, too, has become an abstraction: that is one aspect of his loss. The western plain is strangely empty of individuals for Grove, and is inhabited only by larger-than-life figures--John Elliot, Abe Spalding, Niels Lindstedt--engaged in their heroic tasks. History, too, is empty for him: he is deprived of his own past while Canada has little, particularly in comparison with what he left behind.[7] Grove and his pioneers are oriented toward future possibility: what may become possible, what may be accomplished as land is cleared and farms and communities are established. Small wonder, then, that when he discovered western Canada he stayed: the soil in which he could grow[8] had to occur in a social

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[7] We are given an idea of what he may have left behind in Lynn De Vore's "The Backgrounds of Nightwood: Robin, Felix, and Nora," Journal of Modern Literature, 10, no. 1 (March 1983), pp. 71-90. De Vore claims that Felix Paul Greve was the model for Baron Felix Volkbein in Nightwood and identifies Greve's Elsa as Baroness Elsa von-Freytag Loringhoven, with whom he lived for years in Europe, upon whom he based Fanny Essler, and whom he eventually deserted, De Vore says, in Kentucky. In Nightwood Felix is obsessed with history--or its absence--and his fraudulent aristocratic past.

[8] Grove's phrase from A Search for America, p. 381.

and natural setting that he could at least attempt to control, and in which he was not imprisoned by his past. As he explains in It Needs To Be Said, he chose Canada rather than the United States because of the moral and spiritual dimension he discerned in Canadian society, so unlike the American tendency towards materialism and standardization.[9]

The desperation of Grove's position is apparent in his battles with school teachers and trustees; when he writes to Isaak Warkentin in Germany, "I have got to win out"[10] in a dispute over authority, he is literally speaking the truth. Although Margaret Stobie recognizes that Grove has lost his distance, perspective, judgement, and proportion,[11] J. J. Healy points out that she misses the significance of that loss and the fact that Grove's behaviour is not unwarranted from a man who has lost so much: he has so little of Fred Grove in place that he can afford no flexibility.[12] His battles are not only with people, in social or official arrangements, but with nature as well, during his struggles against wind and snow in Over Prairie Trails. Not only must he define himself in opposition to the other, be it human or

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[9] Frederick Philip Grove, "Nationhood," It Needs to be Said (1929; rpt. Ottawa: The Tecumseh Press, 1982), pp. 135-163.

[10] Desmond Pacey, ed., The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 9. To Isaak J. Warkentin, December 6, 1913.

[11] Margaret Stobie, "Grove's Letters from the Mennonite Reserve," Canadian Literature, no. 59 (Winter 1974), p. 70.

[12] Healy, "Grove and the Matter of Germany," p. 173.

not, but he must prevail: his need goes beyond conventional identity formation and points up what is the crux of his situation. Grove has no room for compromise, but stakes everything he is and has every time he asserts himself, his name, his position. As Phil Branden admits in A Search for America, "[n]obody who is self-conscious can get away with the pretence that he is at ease" (21). Because Grove's assertions are so fraught with risk, because his position is so uncertain and his creation and placement of self only tentative, his writing can be only the dramatic presentation of generalized, social man working out ethical dilemmas.[13] He cannot be specific because sketching in the general outlines of individuals and society takes almost all his energy and effort. Struggling to maintain his position beyond the limbo of non-being which he entered when Felix Paul Greve "died," Grove simply cannot negotiate the private, personal, historical realm. His repeated insistence that "I must be I" registers doubly when we realize that the construction and continual shoring up of that I is his life's work. And the irony is doubled, as Grove is, when we realize that the "I" he is securing is, literally, not "I"--that is, not the former existence as Felix Paul Greve.

Grove's life is complicated by the fact that he has lost not only name and place, but language as well. In In Search of Myself he speaks of his social and linguistic isolation: "I felt an

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[13] Healy, "Grove and the Matter of Germany," p. 171.

exile. I was an exile. I did not live among people of my own kind; among people who, metaphorically, spoke my language;...."[14] Of course this is literally as well as metaphorically true for Grove, and for Phil in A Search for America. Phil's language is not the English of North America, nor the casual parlance of the man from Simpson's. In a larger sense, though, Grove has lost the ability to speak: "I realized that I had at bottom no language which was peculiarly my own" (338). Recurring throughout his writing are the silent and deaf old men--John Elliot, Sam Clark, Sigurdsen, Mr. Lund--who live more inside themselves in memory and introspection than in the world and in language. With those characters Grove provides details of his own deafness, entering rooms, conversations, (countries?) to which he has neither cue nor clue.[15] These figures are deprived of personal and social relationships by their inability to communicate; their lack of speech signals their dislocation.

The raft man Phil encounters in A Search for America is one of these silent old men, although somewhat more enigmatic than most of them since we know nothing of his history. After he saves the man from drowning Phil expects a "Much obliged, old chap" or "Thanks for going to all the trouble" (253), but the man does not speak. During the time they spend together Phil too remains

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[14] Frederick Philip Grove, In Search of Myself (1946; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 235. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in the text.

[15] Frederick Philip Grove, The Master of the Mill, (1944; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961), p. 315.

silent: "I wished to speak, to say something. But, after having been silent so long, it seemed inconsiderate to start speaking now; there was something indelicate about my words; I gave it up" (256). The "so long" he has been silent is not just the hours he has spent with the raft man but the more than three months since he has encountered a human being (259). He stays because he craves human contact, not because he has a debt to collect:

> After breakfast he seemed in doubt what to do. He moved aimlessly about. At last he went to the front-door, opened it as if to go out, hesitated for a second, and waited for something to be said or done.
>
> I was going to hang on to him. He was not going to get off as lightly as all that! I had saved him from drowning, he was going to keep me for a day or so!
>
> So I made as if to follow him; and he held the door till I took hold of it. (257)

They have made unexpected and intimate contact, and Phil is determined to retain that sense of connectedness for a short time at least. Curiously, Phil immediately feels an affinity for the raft man. He notes that "[h]e was fully as tall as I was--and I am over six feet" (252) and is fascinated by the way he shakes himself dry: "It had something contagious; I found myself rehearsing the thing in anticipatory impulses; I came near trying to imitate him" (252). Phil does imitate his actions while they are in the shack and gathering wood and despite his insistence that the man is "queer" and "weird", he recognizes their kinship:

> It [the encounter] affected me profoundly, probably because it came at a critical moment. As for the peculiarities

> of this representative of the genus homo, I did not feel called upon to judge him. I did no longer forget that possibly my own mentality would seem abnormal to most people with whom I might come into contact. Certain conceptions which were dimly forming in my mental recesses made me question the value of much that was highly prized by other men. I had found, for instance, that talking largely keeps you from thinking. (259-260)

At this point Phil realizes that his search is not geographical, and decides to return to human society. It is a critical moment for him because it is his own life which has been in danger. He is, he has told us, in the depths; he has actively avoided encounters with other people; he has almost ceased to eat; he has been drifting and has lost his raft. Like the raft man, he is in danger of going down almost willingly, without a shout:

> The weird feature of this life-and-death struggle was the absolute silence in which it proceeded. There had been no shout, no sound beyond that of the splashing water....
>
> When I got him, he seemed to have given up; but as soon as I jerked him to the surface, he started to fight, grabbing wildly, impeding my arms. (252)

After their two days and three nights together in silence, during which Phil concludes that he is deaf and dumb, the raft man responds to his farewell:

> And something startling happened. The man spoke. He spoke with an effort, twisting his whole body in the act, the words sounding like those of an overgrown boy when he is changing his voice, hoarse, unexpectedly loud and husky. It looked and sounded as if he were heaving the words up from, let me say, his abdomen and ejecting them forcibly.

What he said was, "I reckon." (259)

Grove's first speech as Grove could not have been less laboured or significant.

Phil's return to speech and society will involve communication and participation, activities he has eschewed in his disillusionment. I think it very likely that Grove, too, experienced a similar period of isolation and disillusionment between his disappearance from Europe in 1909 and his official arrival in Manitoba in 1912. Certainly it was a period of silence: no trace has been found of him during those years.[16] Grove's return to speech is as startling and dramatic as the raft man's. Janet Giltrow argues that as a writer Grove was obsessed with the problem of audience and suffered the silence of an alien in a foreign place, writing in a foreign language, with no one to receive his communication.[17] Grove presents Branden's emigration as drastic and forced--he is stranded in North America without funds at his father's death.[18] The character of that emigration results in disorientation and isolation: Branden becomes anonymous and silent, since his European identity has no validity

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[16] Spettigue was unable to uncover any evidence of Grove in the United States, although Mrs. Grove asserted that he taught school in Kentucky and Grove refers to a relationship with a woman in Arkansas in a letter to Isaak Warkentin. See Spettigue, FPG, 173-174; Pacey, Letters, p. 13 (to I. J. Warkentin, February 10, 1914); and note 7 above.

[17] Janet Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," Canadian Literature, no. 90, (Autumn 1981), p. 94.

[18] One could read Greve as Grove's "father" at this point, a further doubling of his self-creation.

in his new circumstances, and no word is heard or spoken of what had been his accustomed discourse. For Grove's part, his own lack of social recognition simply underlines his personal and private anonymity and duplicity: "But who was I?"[19] He has no conclusive connection with a clearly identifiable audience sympathetic to his argument: his ties with the old world are ambiguous, tortuous, and attenuated,[20] and those with the new nonexistent.

In Search of Myself is Grove's public account of his life, addressed to a possibly indifferent readership. As he explains it, his French friend's (Gide's) biography causes him to recognize the insignificance of his own literary accomplishments, although at one time he appeared to be the more promising writer. Their friendship, however, is apparently another of Grove's constructions. Gide's accounts of their meetings are quite different from Grove's: it seems that Greve's attempted relationship with Gide was not successful, making their friendship of fiction, not fact.[21] Again, we have doubling, with layers of fiction laid over fiction. In this instance it is a fictional audience: Gide is not reading Grove's work not because he has lost touch with a friend from his youth, but because there was no

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[19] Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 7.

[20] Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," p. 94.

[21] Spettigue, FPG, pp. 190-191, and Gide's Conversation avec un Allemand and Journals, discussed in Spettigue, FPG, pp. 119-131. It would seem that whatever relationship did exist was professional rather than personal.

relationship that would have made him interested in Grove even had he known who or where he was. Grove's literary reaction--the one he uses as the framework for In Search of Myself--is oriented outward to seek public justification, to explain his failure to someone, to reach the absent audience:

> What, so I asked myself, had been the reason of my thus grievously disappointing my friend, the Frenchman? There were several superficial reasons, of course. But the chief reason no doubt was that I had never had an audience; for no matter what one may say, he says it to somebody; and if there is nobody to hear, it remains as though it had never been said; the tree falling in a forest where there is none to hear, produces no sound. A book arises as much in the mind of the reader as in that of the writer; and the writer's art consists above all in creating response; the effect of a book is the result of a collaboration between writer and audience. That collaboration I had failed to enforce....
>
> My struggle had been such as to make defeat a foregone conclusion. Did it matter? To whom should it matter? To me? But who was I? And suddenly it seemed to me that the only thing that really mattered was the explanation of that defeat. To whom explain it?.... (6-7)

Giltrow puts Grove's non-fiction in the tradition of travel writing, and argues that by choosing that genre Grove is defining his idea of his place as a social being.[22] According to the generic conventions, travel literature imparts new information to the audience, is written by a member of good standing of the community being addressed, and signals by its language the

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[22] Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," p. 93.

writer's continuing membership in the original culture.[23] In Grove's own assessment he is facing a void. He has no audience: he has surely lost Greve's European audience. He speaks another language, literally (English instead of German) and metaphorically, which intensifies his feelings of isolation. His voice is unheard: he feels ignored by the Canadian literary community and says that his manuscripts are returned unread. In Search of Myself is in many ways Grove's summation of himself--the constructed fiction, in Canada both in action and in fiction, and in the past that he has manufactured in Europe--an assessment of how far he could push his game.[24] The sense of failure permeates the work, however: failure as a writer, a man of letters, a provider for his family. He has already failed in Europe: now in Canada the pattern repeats itself. What audience and reputation he did have was never enough for the man who had been on the fringes in both Europe and Canada, wanting recognition, respect, and a sense of belonging.

His past, however, is as he wants it to be: in In Search of Myself he "constructs a meticulously imagined system of origins and a vehement sense of having come from somewhere."[25] He cannot go back, either to the place he really came from or to the one he

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[23] Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," p. 93.

[24] This is what Greve says of Oscar Wilde. Felix Paul Greve, Oscar Wilde, 1903; rpt. trans. Barry Asker (Vancouver: William Hoffer, 1984), p. 16.

[25] Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," p. 105.

imagines is his past, but he can, and does, direct his art there. As Giltrow puts it, with his fictions of his origins he makes his own audience for the story of his travels.[26] The audience he chooses is European--this book is directed to Gide, "the Frenchman":

> The lack of an audience? But even the lack of an audience is not the important thing. The important thing is that you have such an audience in mind when you speak. Whether it is really there does not matter. In case of need you can imagine it. But was there any need for me to imagine it? If I could explain, to someone, why I had failed, the explanation might more than compensate for the failure to have made myself heard so far. Could I explain it? I did not know. I saw the reasons clearly enough. I must try. And "to someone"? To whom? To whom but my friend the young Frenchman who was now a man of seventy or more? Whether he ever read the explanation, what did it matter? (10-11)

Of course Gide, as audience, remains absent. Grove is actually choosing the imaginary audience which he knows will function rhetorically for him: he can believe he is doing more than speaking out of one void into another, and can move from silence to speech, creating himself within a history, a society, a place. This is again ironic in view of Grove's situation: although he denied his European identity and past--his actual connection to society, place, history--when he needs to address his work and find an audience which we assume he wants to be sympathetic, it is precisely there that he turns. He chooses to situate his literary

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[26] Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," p. 105.

vindication with the European who disappointed him, and in the place where his life was so untenable that he had to die to it.[27]

In facing Europe, his writing becomes addressed and transmissible.[28] He successfully created a context for himself and his art, while the response of Canadians--his real audience--to his work gave him at least a measure of the public reputation he so desired, although it is true that his recognition in the twenties was largely that of a public man whose ideals and ideas of nationhood and literature were applauded in a period of national enthusiasm and energy. He felt neglected, unread, and unnoticed in Canada, although much of his work was published and sold, and he travelled the country on lecture tours. He never attained either the financial or psychological security that would have accompanied his ideas of success and recognition, although whether that would ever have been possible after his disastrous financial arrangements in Europe and the psychological trauma of his displacement is questionable.

The very completeness of his break with the old world determines Grove's inability to perceive and conceive the new. He is, in fact, extremely old world oriented: he constantly compares, either explicitly or implicitly, the Canadian literary community to the circles in which he participated, or at least wanted to, in Europe. The new identity he creates for himself is

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[27] See my discussion above, and note 21.

[28] Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," p. 105.

an old world identity. This is partly, of course, for practical reasons: on the Canadian prairie in the 1910's most settlers were immigrants and he could not very well hide a German accent or his Europeanness, although he certainly denied his German nationality. His new identity is also traditional, upper class, and old world: Grove presents himself as a widely-read nineteenth-century man, unconcerned with official university documentation of his qualifications. More importantly, however, he cannot deny the kind of past he has had, or has wanted to have--his posited origins are aristocratic, cultured, genteel, wealthy. Grove's audience is problematic for him precisely because he has no past: in a curiously double sense he has had two and lost them both by denying the Greve past which really existed, and substituting for it a past which in his imagination is an improvement on the original. Grove is both aware of and controlled by his past, which complicates the construction of the new identity; the nature of "I" is doubly uncertain as he eradicates one past and uses parts of it to make a new, in what for him is a historical vacuum.

As Grove's actions and the years prove just how irreversible his break with the old world is, he becomes more and more obsessed with what he has left behind: In Search of Myself is published in 1946, virtually at the end of his career, as a conclusion to the elaborate hoax and an assessment of the success of the entire venture. In Grove's career, however, we do not have an impression of a coherent, consistent self speaking through all the works. His own assessment of Oscar Wilde could well be applied to

himself: "When [he] is purely himself in his work, it is not the artist in him that speaks. Rather, it is a moment in the life of a man...."[29] In Greve's/Grove's works we have a series of moments, seemingly written by a series of men. At the end we see that whatever coherence of self he may have achieved, he has not achieved a coherence of place: although he may at times have Fred Grove more or less in place, he does not have Canada in place. The concentration on the self, creating it and putting it into action in the absence of the accustomed place, structures, or understandings leaves him with little ability, opportunity, energy, or even desire to look at the new world. For that reason we only get generalized figures sketched onto the new background: he really does not know what this new society is about. He is, accordingly, able to create less a sense of Canada, its social structures, and its people, than of Europe because he knows the new subject less well and can infuse it with less of himself--in Europe he was an intact, coherent person, but in Canada he is almost absent.

As Kroetsch puts it, Grove dreams Europe if only to find a place to be from.[30] He no less dreams North America as he searches for his ideal across the continent. He writes the place, the landscape into existence: "...the bush-country of Manitoba as I had 'created' it; for the landscape as it lives in this novel

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[29] Greve, Oscar Wilde, p. 14.

[30] Robert Kroetsch, "F. P. Grove: The Finding," in The Stone Hammer Poems 1960-1975 (Victoria: Oolichan Books, 1975), p. 46.

and in others, and its human inhabitants as well, were mine, were the product of my mind...."[31] Part of Grove's problem is the discrepancy between the actual and the imagined environment. His Canada, his perceived environment, is imagined just as his identity (and his Europe) is. At the end of A Search for America when he finds soil in which he can take root, it is no surprise that it is in Canada: although the Abe Lincolns are everywhere, in Canada they are more apt to achieve the spiritual wholeness that he sees in the prairie pioneer. Grove is bound, however, to be disappointed. He wants Canada to be something it is not: it fails as his ideal audience. Near the end of his life when he is putting aside a few cents each week to buy a new shaving brush, reality does not fit with the imagined version. Canada is as he wants it to be only in his fiction, where he can move the roads and place the farmsteads: in the fictive version the landscape and its inhabitants "had become more real than any actuality could have been."[32] His imagined identity is not simply an exercise or adventure, but a struggle for survival. Richardson can place himself and his characters back into the highland oasis--that convention remains available to him--but Grove has erased past and history, and has no possibility of reversing the passage. Deprived of participation in a society which metaphorically or literally speaks his language, he has to invent his audience, his

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[31] Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 373.

[32] Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 373.

reading public, his connection to something outside himself. Grove's invention of a new world for himself is obsessively present in all his writing.

His act of self-creation is, of course, in language. The fiction he created about himself claimed him in the way his heroes' creations claimed them, and was a more valid spiritual history than his own experience had been. Paul John Eakin, in his study of autobiography, argues that "autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation, and, further, that the self that is the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure."[33] Grove's identity and life are certainly a complex fictive structure, in language: as Eakin has it, the creation of self and language are interdependent.[34] Grove writes himself into existence as a social being and as an individual. He has to create and maintain a closed world for himself: if he allows the infinite to intrude, the consequences will be unlimited and uncontrollable. Grove's and his pioneers' environments are created and limited by Grove's imagination: the pioneers inhabit imaginary future space as they build a civilized order and look forward to the country that will be created of it, while Grove's is a mental and linguistic construct.

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[33] Eakin, Fictions in Autobiography, p. 3.

[34] Eakin, Fictions in Autobiography, pp. 209ff.

In the pioneer novels he and his settlers inscribe a grid on the landscape. Grove's physical descriptions of human settlements and journeys or human actions in nature become cartographers' instructions as he uses numbers and directions to chart human progress in man-made terms of reference. Occasionally, however, they become lost in dead precision and detail: "Twenty-six times I had gone along this piece of it, but thirteen times it had been at night, and thirteen times I had been facing west, when I went back to the scene of my work. So I had never looked east very far."[35] East is, of course, the direction of Europe—home. The imposition of the grid is a mark of human definition, critical to the pioneer and to Grove, although that order of farmyards and fences is, again, Grove's own creation: "But although I have not consciously introduced any changes in the landscape as God made it, I have in fairness to the settlers entirely redrawn the superimposed man-made landscape."[36] The map must be redrawn, the world remade, not to protect the settlers but to create the image of human order on the natural landscape and to secure human identity and existence. If not, if the landscape remains unmarked not only by human order but by his order, human

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[35] Frederick Philip Grove, Over Prairie Trails (1922; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 54.

[36] Grove, Over Prairie Trails, p. 8n.

existence for Grove is negated.[37] The worlds he presents are always on the edge of disintegration.

The order the pioneer creates in the landscape is his defence, as Grove's writing is his. Grove is not simply the subject of his own writing--his life is his narrative. As Eakin puts it, to write history and autobiography is to perform metaphorically a work of personal restoration[38] and to re-integrate the self in culture,[39] a process which is not unlike Turner's analysis of the rite of passage. Eakin goes further in claiming that to write is to constitute reality,[40] much as Berger and Luckmann maintain that reality is socially constructed in language.[41] If we accept these arguments, it is clear that not only does the moment of language originate the self, but its world--its social reality--as well. Seen in this frame, Grove's autobiographical acts are fully consistent and comprehensible. The significance of his origination of self as he acquires language is doubled when we realize that his use of English for

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[37] Spettigue appears to think differently in his comments on Greve's "Reise in Schweden," that is, "Travelling in Sweden" (FPG, pp. 154-158), but his point is not sufficiently developed for me to discuss.

[38] Eakin, Fictions in Autobiography, p. 252.

[39] Eakin, Fictions in Autobiography, p. 275.

[40] Eakin, Fictions in Autobiography, p. 179.

[41] The reality of everyday life is possible only because subjective meanings become objective by means of a system of signification, the most important of which is language (Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, pp. 35-41).

his Canadian writing is his second acquisition of a national discourse.[42] In keeping with his earlier argument, Eakin holds that the history of the self is coextensive with discourse itself:[43] when Greve became Grove his status as a German speaker was rendered uncertain.[44] Without the repeated assertion of control, order, and meaning which he can exert in his writing, the alternative of his own non-meaning--the suicide he faked--threatens. Like Jeremy in Gone Indian, if he loses this language he will disappear for what is for him the second time. He cannot risk that personal and national dislocation again.

By defining the landscape in concrete terms, Grove establishes a contrast to his pioneer and the necessary distinction between the human being and the natural landscape. He must work very hard to maintain the division of "I" and not "I" that he repeatedly asserts. "I" must be "I," but the existence of a discrete personality can be proven only by contrast--to other human beings in a social setting and to the natural landscape. The external is a threat, and can easily disintegrate the precarious sense of self. Grove has already suffered that

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[42] This is if we take German to be his first, and accept that the other languages he used in his work as a translator are not significant in constituting his national identity.

[43] Eakin, Fictions in Autobiography, p. 198.

[44] Grove's first letter to Isaak Warkentin in 1913 is in German, and he apparently began Settlers of the Marsh in German. With these exceptions, however, the evidence suggests that in his literary life he used English. He also denied his German nationality, which suggests that he would have avoided drawing attention to himself by using the language.

disintegration once, if not twice: his prison term in Germany and the resulting public knowledge of his poverty closed social and literary circles to him, and his faked suicide was a final and fatal ending to his actual life as Greve. The constructed persona he displays in Canada is a second version of himself, and much less secure because it is just that—it is created by will and whim, and would be even easier to erase than was his existence as Greve. He is intent on making a closed and secure place for himself in Canada--the covered cutter he uses for his journeys between Gladstone and Falmouth can be seen as a symbol of his need for protection as he crosses a blank space in which he can be lost and obliterated. Giltrow suggests that the silence surrounding him during those drives constitutes a psychological shelter, and that as the only human in the scene, he constitutes its focus;[45] I suggest that his civil and colonial space remains radically in question.

Like his settlers', Grove's identity is linked to his creation. While the pioneers define themselves with fences and farmyards and names of districts, Grove writes. He exists, or ceases to, as he speaks/writes and falls silent. He spends his life, in North America at least, attempting to put himself into a discourse, declaring both his lack of language[46] and his personal

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45 Giltrow, "Grove in Search of an Audience," p. 101.

46 Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 338.

absence: "I believe I have hidden myself fairly well."[47] His silences are about himself and his past, and are also within his characters. In the second chapter of A Search for America he uses both the first and third persons, describing to his readers "the young man that was I" (21) and showing that young man desperately attempting to retain his sense of himself as a dignified European in his conversation in the rail car. Phil can barely communicate with the man from Simpson's—he does not know the language here, or how to respond to a North American. That lack of his accustomed mode of discourse eventually results in the total silence and isolation of "The Depths," a withdrawal which signals a breakdown in human order. Neither Phil nor Grove can enter the discourse of the new world, at least fully. The same lack of comprehension which would prevent Grove from using that discourse for his desired European audience prevents him from entering it himself.

Grove's invented world holds for him, but only with constant reinforcement. It does not enable him to move much beyond character types in his portrayal of male pioneers, but it does provide him with one of his subjects—the chronicle of life on the prairies. He is permanently preoccupied with building structures of experience in language to give meaning to himself and to North America. His energy is devoted to making a place, in more than one sense. In his writing he—and we—continually slam into the

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[47] Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 383.

imposed orders of fence posts and families, maps and surveys, distinctions between the human and the landscape. The world-in-itself phenomenon does not exist for Grove. His determination to be someone else in the new world necessitated the erasure of Felix Paul Greve and the creation and assertion of a new self. He has difficulty maintaining the delicate balance and emerging from the middle passage, what Van Gennep calls the marginal or liminal phase of the rite of passage which accompanies every change of structural context.[48] Grove certainly changes his structural context, and displays characteristics of the mid-transition stage of liminality: structural invisibility may be marked by seclusion, loss of name, removal of clothes (Phil in America), or the loss or limitation of speech.[49] Just as the water does not reflect the image of Atwood's Moodie,[50] nothing in North America reflects Grove to himself despite his attempts to make and live a life--in Kroetsch's terms, make love--here, in the discourse of his writing.

How do you make love in a new country?--how do you establish a social place?--how do you put Canada into discourse? Grove must have more than simply a sociological model to make the social place and the connections of kinship. He has little knowledge of the personal attributes of individual North Americans and gives us

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[48] Turner, "Variations," p. 36.

[49] Turner, "Variations," pp. 36-37.

[50] Margaret Atwood, "Disembarking at Quebec," The Journals of Susannah Moodie (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 11.

pioneers who stand as symbols against the sky, and say nothing. He can detail the characteristics of the group, but has difficulty putting a character into a dialogue:

> He shook Norman till he awoke.
> 'You must get up,' he said. 'Mother is sick. I am going for the doctor. Hitch John's bronchos to the buggy. I am going to change my clothes.'
> Norman jumped to his feet. He staggered. 'Yes,' he said. Then, 'Would you mind repeating that?'
> John Elliot did.
> Norman broke into a frenzy of hurry.
> 'In the morning,' John Elliot added before he left the room, 'if I am not back, you will have to attend to the feeding alone.'
> 'All right, father.' [51]

John Elliot cannot join the discourse of his children, with their casual talk and ideas, or that of the settlers of his own age like Old Mr. Harvey who wants to talk about his fear of death: "But, Elliot, cease to be! I'm afraid, I tell you! I don't want to cease to be. How can I cease to be, tell me that!" (161). Elliot has no patience or desire to engage the topic because it touches his own deepest concern. The hesitations and silences of Grove's characters speak to his own social and psychological dislocation.

Grove's attention is focussed on the self in the autobiographies and on the distinction between nature and "I"/not "I" in Over Prairie Trails. When he attempts to put an individual into society we get the pioneer novels concerned with building

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[51] Frederick Philip Grove, Our Daily Bread (1928; rpt. Toronto: 1975), p. 114. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in the text.

families and communities, such as Settlers of the Marsh, Fruits of the Earth, and Our Daily Bread: Niels is determined to establish a farm, Abe a district, Elliot a dynasty. In Grove's work personal emotional relationships are awkward, wrong, and necessary. The sense of human relatedness which occurs in relationships with other people is critical as it can either strengthen or destroy individual identity in his universe.

The relationships in Grove's translated German novels do not carry the same pressure: although the problematic nature of relationships between the sexes forms the basis of the plots of The Master Mason's House and Fanny Essler, they remain just that: an aspect of the work, and of the characters' lives. Neither the world nor the identities of the protagonists crumble because they are not happy in love. In The Master Mason's House Susie seems to be exchanging the tyranny of her father for another relationship of dependence in her planned marriage to Consul Blume. It is clear, however, that she will be the dominant partner: she drives a hard bargain in the compromise of her independence, and her success is only as qualified as it must be within her social circumstances. Fanny in Fanny Essler spends her life searching for her prince, not to consolidate her sense of her own identity but because she wants to be comfortable and secure, advantages she has been taught to expect from marriage. Her relationships with men fail because she makes the wrong choices, and her men either will not or cannot support her or accept her for what she is. While the male characters in Fanny Essler all function in a

similar manner--all except Stumpf fail in their relationships with her--unlike the figures in the Canadian works, they are individually distinct and developed, and Fanny is complete and fully realized. Greve has little at stake in the two German novels, drawing on a life which is not yet problematic.[52] These works are not primarily informed by the question of identity: other elements, including Greve's interest in naturalism, keep that question central, but it is not the exclusive the focus of his writing.[53] Not surprisingly, in his Canadian works, with the exception of the children's book he wrote with his son in mind,[54] Grove has difficulty negotiating the personal and emotional growth and accommodation that must occur in relationships with other people. In The Master Mason's House and Fanny Essler the women are protagonists; in his Canadian novels women are marginal. The question of identity for Grove in the new world is personal, and male. His identity and personality are rigidly defined, and necessarily so; his novels are largely about patriarchs, to whom

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[52] Anthony Riley discusses the parallels between elements of Fanny Essler and what we know of Greve's life ("The Case of Greve/Grove: The European Roots of a Canadian Writer," in Walter E. Riedel, The Old World and the New [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984], p. 48).

[53] Spettigue quotes from a German review of Fanny Essler (FPG, p. 139) which notes the "search for the self" and indicates his general agreement, but does not fully engage the point.

[54] Frederick Philip Grove, The Genesis of Grove's The Adventures of Leonard Broadus: A Text and Commentary (1940; ed. Mary Rubio, Guelph: Canadian Children's Press, 1983). In his preface, Leonard Grove points out that the background of the story comes from an actual incident in his own childhood.

he cannot extend even a fictional flexibility.[55] A condition of personal relatedness and connectedness that was intact for Greve in Europe is not so for Grove in Canada, and the Canadian and German discourses differ accordingly.

Kroetsch discerns Grove's need to construct his world in terms of human relationships:

> we say with your waiting wife (but she
> was the world before you invented it
> old liar) "You had a hard trip?" [56]

The same need operates in the characters in his novels. Our Daily Bread is an ontological meditation. John Elliot's ambition is to realize himself as an Old Testament patriarch, scattering his seed and his children fruitfully on the land around him. His life takes meaning and purpose from his vision of himself surrounded by a tribe which will be a reflection of himself and follow his maxim of growing daily bread. Elliot's means of ordering is through ties of kinship, which are critical to his existence. He assembles the materials necessary to realize his ambition by finding a wife "who seemed to be his complement" (11) and by "multiplying his own personality" (10). His sense of himself as patriarch is tied to his idea that his children will be extensions of himself, or at most, "a compound of the two parent natures" (10). He watches in wonder, however, as they assert their own personalities:

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[55] In conversation with E. D. Blodgett.

[56] Kroetsch, "F. P. Grove: The Finding," in Stone Hammer Poems, p. 47. My emphasis.

> In each of them [the children] a third thing had appeared, their individual being, with inclinations and desires which seemed to be without a derivation from himself or his wife; and the strangest thing about it was that these new individual natures differed in each single one of his children. Whence were they? This was the most puzzling thing of all: a thing to which he always reverted. Already, at times, he began to see failure ahead in what his own pensive and contemplative soul had conceived to be the peculiar life work and task of his very existence. (12)

The spectacle of individuality is amazing to him. When those individualities are not like his own—none of his children becomes successfully established on the land--his identity is challenged and his conception of himself destroyed, although he cannot understand how or why. Elliot, and Grove as well, have been like the birds of passage he envisions drifting over a strange land of unexplained and inexplicable mysteries (343).

Elliot's dream of self-creation is a failure because he has used unreliable materials--his wife and children—rather than himself. His wife's rejection of him, disgust at their sexual relationship, and madness are the manifestations of her rebellion against his attempt to create himself out of her. The fact that their relationship is disrupted puzzles and troubles him: "Yet he was for ever preoccupied with the thought of his wife and his relation to her. Many a time, while plowing, that fall, he would stop his horses in the field and sit and start. Then, 'Odd!' he

would say,... " (134). [57] When he is interviewed by a prospective writer at his daughter's house in Winnipeg he is seen as an artifact, whose pioneer "story [was] an inspiration" (183). He is unable to enter the discourse in person, although in fact he has entered his province's history. Both Grove and Elliot are outdistanced by time and history: although his reputation was considerable, Grove remained personally isolated, while the historic John Elliot of Sedgeby is a legend in the province, not a person, while he yet lives. Elliot does not possess the individual identity he spent his life trying to assemble; unable to speak of the things that mean most to him he dies, in silence, in the wreck of his house.

There are many things Grove cannot speak of, directly at least. As Greve said of Wilde: "[He] put everything into the service of artifice."[58] The same could be said of Greve/Grove; as Douglas Spettigue puts it, "[s]ooner or later FPG manages to work into this book [In Search of Myself] the places and events of his early life, all disembodied, atomized and let float free before being cemented into their fictional places."[59] The tricks in the

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[57] In the manuscript copybook of Our Daily Bread in the Department of Archives and Special Collections, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of Manitoba, Grove has much more completely developed the relationship between John and Martha Elliot. Elliot has a more healthy and balanced relationship with his wife, both emotionally and rationally: they show each other personal, emotional warmth, and she answers his questions about "the problem of his age—scepticism"—with an admonition to faith.

[58] Greve, Oscar Wilde, p. 20.

[59] Spettigue, FPG, p. 187.

autobiographies--the hints at his past and tantalizingly partial truths[60]--and the wry humour he can occasionally afford show the intense pressure he felt to keep his version of reality intact and under control. He has difficulty using language to create and sustain the artifice; the tension is particularly apparent in the works written after he left Europe which deal with ontological concerns.

Grove's invention of the new world is not an unqualified success--it is remarkable that he managed it at all, in its amazing complexity, but it is never securely in place. He is not able to complete the portrait of the socialized individual in his own life: his story in Canada is littered with confrontations with school board officials and resignations from teaching positions. He admits his temptation to go to the wall, but

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60 Spettigue lists numerous coincidences of names, ages, and events in Grove's and Greve's writing, and in the evidence of Greve's real life and the life history Grove constructs. Greve/Grove used fragments of truth, transposed in various fashions but bearing a relation to his actual experience: Greve's father is Carl Eduard, Fanny's last lover is Friedrich Carl Reelen, one of Greve's pseudonyms is Friedrich Carl Gerden. In The Master Mason's House Susie Ihle's mother is named Bertha and is the same age in the novel when her marriage is breaking up as Bertha Reichentrog Greve is when she is in similar circumstances. Greve's and Grove's birthdays are both February 14, but Greve is born in 1879 instead of 1873, making the Canadian Grove younger than he claimed to be. The European travels did occur, but during and after his university years instead of his childhood. Uncle Jacobsen, the boarding house in Hamburg, his parents' separation, the absence/death of sister(s), the purported nationalities (Swedish, Russian, German), the distant or absent authoritarian father figures are all true in some form, and turn up repeatedly in various forms in his writing. A novel titled Felix Powell's Career was destroyed by Mrs. Grove or on her instructions. For further details see Spettigue's FPG, especially "Framing An Autobiography," pp. 169-196.

settles for the wilderness:[61] for him the wilderness is a relatively remote position from where he can observe his subject. There is, accordingly, a distance between himself and his self-portraits in the autobiographical works, and the characters in his fiction. He identifies what is necessary for himself and his characters to move beyond generalized, sociological enquiries—his works are starred with those recognitions—but he can never show a coherent, intact, and in place identity.

The incomplete and fragmented natures of these personalities is most clearly apparent in their relationships with other people, usually women. In Our Daily Bread Elliot is unable to move into a close and honest relationship with his family, although it is clear in the text that both he and Grove know that this is what could transform his family into a meaningful version of the dynasty he is determined to create. Niels's redemption, although incomplete, is his marriage with Ellen at the end of Settlers of the Marsh which functions as a symbol for his reconnection to a human world of emotion, commitment, and responsibility. In The Master of the Mill Sam Clark is aware that he married the wrong Maud; his life would have been much different had he chosen the woman of heart and instinct rather than of mind. Abe in Fruits of the Earth is determined to leave his name and mark on the district, but his entry into municipal politics is a mistake and his reconciliation with the community fails. Grove is fascinated

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[61] Pacey, Letters, p. 13. To Isaak J. Warkentin, February 10, 1914.

by the problematic nature of human relationships, but a particular tension and awkwardness enters the Canadian works. The main characters in Greve's German works are women who are strong enough to make decisions and to take action, although their successes are qualified. Grove's Canadian female characters are silent and largely absent, functioning as figures who act as a revolving background and foreground for the men rather than as strong, intact women.[62] They are closer than their husbands to a coherent sense of self within harmonious human relationships, although those relationships are more often with their children than with their husbands, but we do not see enough of them: although Grove's sympathy is with the women,[63] in the Canadian novels his attention is not.

Because he is interested in more than the image of a human being in society, Grove cannot limit his writing to fiction. He cannot avoid his intense preoccupation with himself as a human being in society, and so we get the mixture of genres in the two Searches. By insisting on his identity as a writer he shows the imperative he felt to make himself not only visible, but highly and publicly so in his new life. One assumes that he could have continued as a teacher, making his financial situation at least

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62 See E. D. Blodgett's discussion of male-female roles in Grove's German and Canadian novels in "Alias Grove: Variations in Disguise," Configuration (Toronto: ECW Press, 1982), pp. 112-153. Lorraine McMullen discusses the female characters in the Canadian novels in "Women in Grove's Novels," Inscape: The Grove Edition 1974, Symposium issue, 11, no. 1 (Spring 1974), pp. 67-76.

63 Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 224.

more secure, but he does not: his dislocation insists that it be declared, in writing, in language, in an order that is more than simply personal. As Healy puts it, asserting himself as a writer became a shorthand and coded way for Grove to assert his sense of self. And asserting such a self was part of Grove's imperative for survival after his flight from Germany.[64] The primary act of declaring oneself has to take place in language as well as in life: "I have often doubted whether there is anything that I can legitimately call 'I.'"[65] As Grove himself realizes, "[m]y life was, or should have been, the life of the imagination."[66] Oddly, his life both was, and was not of the imagination--in his own estimate he spent far too much time dealing with the financial and practical necessities of existence, but that existence was created out of his own imagination.

How do you put Canada into discourse?--how do you grow a prairie town? Grove may say that he takes root in western Canada, but he survives rather than flourishes. Something is missing in the transaction: he simply cannot reconnect in a vital way, although he goes through all the right motions to do so--wife, children, job, property. Working in a new language, a new place, a new existence, he is engaged in putting into words an experience he can hardly dare to acknowledge even partially, using what bits of himself he can recover. He is building here and now out of the

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64 Healy, "Grove and the Matter of Germany," pp. 171-172.

65 Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 452.

66 Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 452.

discarded fragments of there and then. In Grove's case those fragments are of place, history, identity. Watson's fragments are linguistic: she uses bits of discarded discourse to create a language for an inarticulate people. Grove remained essentially, in his Canadian existence, an inarticulate man. His life was the imaginative masterpiece he kept trying to write.

FOUR: WATSON

RE-INVENTING THE LANGUAGE

In The Double Hook there is a more theoretical consideration of the silences surrounding language than in the work of Richardson and Grove. Watson shows that meaning, being, and community are possible only within language; when language does not function the human is under siege. She gives expression to ultimate questions and insights, dealing with the ambivalent significance of phenomena and the human relationship to truth. The Double Hook is informed by a sense of the sacredness and the hermeneutic function of language, as well as by an awareness of the possibilities of play and jouissance. Watson uses a narrative structure[1] to show an inarticulate people moving into language and makes this event resonate with echoes of classical, Christian, and native mythologies of creation and apocalypse. The Double Hook is caused by Watson's fascination with language and structure, and is created out of her rich store of literary images and references. It approaches a silence which represents existential absurdity as well as personal despair, and ends with qualified optimism.

Watson and her figures construct a language out of the fragments of cultures and traditions. Watson is divided, however,

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[1] Bruce Meyer and Brian O'Riordan, "Sheila Watson: It's What You Say," in In Their Words. Interviews with Fourteen Canadian Writers (Toronto: Anansi, 1984), p. 166.

between her belief in language as signification and her fascination with the possibilities of non-meaning within discourse. She is committed to closure because of her belief that language means--it is what you say that has importance and significance.[2] Despite the fact that Watson gives Coyote the last word in The Double Hook as if to undercut the solidity of the community and the resolution of the novel, she will not allow that language does not signify and closure is not possible. Although the language that comes out of those reconstructed fragments means for the hill people, and for Watson as well, The Double Hook is such a radical questioning of the possibility of human language that the author and the text come very near to apocalyptic silence.

In The Double Hook language is used to block denotation: Watson repeatedly cancels meanings and the expectation that meaning will resolve the tensions and conflicts brought about by the text. The intertextual nature of the work, which relies on the code texts of the Books of the Prophets, the Psalms, Roman Catholic liturgy, Indian mythology, classical mythology, and contemporary literature, requires that the reader be not only alert and well-read but able to make the connections Watson refuses, particularly in the first part of the novel, to provide. At the beginning of the work these connections are absent at the

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2 Meyer and O'Riordan, "It's What You Say," p. 166.

level of syntax and the reader is forced to fill in the missing subjects of sentences:

> James walking away. The old lady falling. There under the jaw of the roof. In the vault of the bed loft. Into the shadow of death. Pushed by James's will. By James's hand. By James's words: This is my day. You'll not fish today.[3]

At other times the reader must supply the reference to the missing text, in this instance Faulkner's bear: "Angel had seen the bear at the fish camp. Seen the bear rising on its haunches. Prostrating itself before the unsacked winds" (39). The reader must also recognize the fragments Watson uses to realize the significance she has put on the breakdown of language:

> His mind sifted ritual phrases. Some half forgotten. You're welcome. Put your horse in. Pull up. Ave Maria. Benedictus fructus ventris. Introibo.
>
> Introibo. The beginning. The whole thing to live again. Words said over and over here by the stove. His father knowing them by heart. God's servants. The priest's servants. The cup lifting. The bread breaking. Domine non sum dignus. Words coming. The last words.
>
> He rolled from his chair. Stood barefoot. His hands raised.
>
> Pax vobiscum, he said.
>
> The girl lifted her head. She licked the saliva from the corner of her mouth.
>
> What the hell, she said.
>
> Go in peace, he said. (51)

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[3] Sheila Watson, The Double Hook (1959; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969), p. 19. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in the text.

Throughout the text Watson repeatedly uses indefinite pronouns, incomplete sentences, and repetition,[4] dislocates sentence structure, contrasts her diction with conventional usage, obscures events of plot, and extends the distance between word and meaning until the link, if it remains at all, is fragile and tenuous. Watson's words transcend their literal meaning, and suggest so many possibilities of significance that we do not know what her words mean or what she intends us to see:

> He went out of the kitchen into the sun. Outside the world floated like a mote in a straight shaft of glory. A horse coming round the corner of the barn shone copper against the hewn logs, Kip riding black on its reflected brightness. (26)

Because of the way she uses language to describe the setting, the valley--the world--is a peculiarly intangible place where dream and vision merge with reality:

> In the sky above evil had gathered strength. It took body writhing and twisting under the high arch. Lenchen could hear the breath of it in the pause. The swift indrawing. The silence of the contracting muscle. The head drop for the wild plunge and hoof beat of it. (41)

Watson's determination to separate the signifier from the signified--to stretch and break the connection between language and referent--and the temptation of the many and varied ways she can make language serve her ultimately makes language teeter

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[4] Barbara Godard, " 'Between One Cliché and Another': Language in The Double Hook", Studies in Canadian Literature, 3, no. 2 (Summer 1978), pp. 158-159.

between meaning and non-meaning. The world--the word--floats, rather like Greta's fixed and uncertain pump (22).

Much of the significance of The Double Hook and the questions of structure and language which arise from it are related to Watson's idea of place. For Watson the natural environment is an unformed and threatening absence and chaos. Darkness is literally upon the face of the deep--the old lady dragging her hook across the baked mud bed of the lake is enacting creation:

> Still the old lady fished. If the reeds had dried up and the banks folded and crumbled down she would have fished still. If God had come into the valley, come holding out the long finger of salvation, moaning in the darkness, thundering down the gap at the lake head, skimming across the water, drying up the blue signature like blotting-paper, asking where, asking why, defying an answer, she would have thrown her line against the rebuke; she would have caught a piece of mud and looked it over; she would have drawn a line with the barb when the fire of righteousness baked the bottom. (20)

Creation out of formlessness and darkness takes the form of inscription, writing, language, and comes with the act of speech: "Let there be light" resonates behind this passage. That kind of resonance, occurring here and repeatedly throughout the text, builds tension in the work and adds to its power, while leaving the nature of that power undefined.

The people and the setting seem to be of another order of things. As Stephen Scobie puts it, "[w]e are given not so much a landscape as the signs of a landscape, not so much description as

the semiotic conventions of description reduced to their most basic forms."[5] In an insubstantial landscape where roads run from this to that and hills fall off to nowhere, human being has a peculiar existence: it floats, both the figures and the ground ready to unravel into abstraction. Water rises in drought, to kill: "Yet as she watched the old lady, Ara felt death leaking through from the centre of the earth. Death rising to the knee. Death rising to the loin" (21). It is an absurdist landscape, formless and "floorless, roofless, wall-less" (66):

> If a man lost the road in the land round William Potter's, he couldn't find his way by keeping to the creek bottom for the creek flowed this way and that at the land's whim. The earth fell away in hills and clefts as if it had been dropped carelessly wrinkled on the bare floor of the world. (22)

Physical phenomena cannot be accounted for, by William or by anyone else: "I've seen cows, he'd say, with lard running off them into the ground. The most unaccountable thing, he'd say, is the way the sun falls. I've seen a great cow, he'd say, throw no more shadow for its calf than a lean rabbit" (22). When the sun falls strangely or unnaturally, there is little possibility that this landscape will allow for the significance of human existence:[6]

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[5] Stephen Scobie, Sheila Watson and Her Works (Toronto: ECW, 1984), p. 19.

[6] Landscape functions as an even more powerful force in "And the Four Animals" (Sheila Watson, Five Stories [Toronto: Coach House Press, 1984], pp. 71-76); see note 19 below.

> There are men, he'd [William] say, have seen their whole place fade like a cheap shirt. And there's no way a man can fold it up and bring it in out of the sun. You can save a cabbage plant or a tomato plant with tents of paper if you've got the paper, but there's no human being living can tent a field and pasture. (21)

The entire valley is as insubstantial as those tents of paper or the skins of the animals and the hills "pegged like tanned skin to the rack of their own bones" (127). The "flat ribs of the hills" (35) and "the raw skin of the sky" (36) defy the categorization of natural phenomena and deny boundaries: humans, animals, and the elements share similar characteristics. The threat of the landscape is real to James, who fears "dying somewhere alone, caught against a tree or knocked over in an inch of water" (42). Watson implies the sacrificial nature of that death by evoking the crucifixion, but in this place it would be meaningless. The landscape is under the control--bewitching?--of some power but whether it is beneficent or evil, Jehovah or Coyote, is unclear. Jehovah is real only to the Widow, who dreads the punishment at Judgement. Ara blends God and Coyote in an image of power and cruelty: "Sometimes I think of God like that, she said. The glory of his face shaded by his hat. Not coaxing with pans of oats, but coming after you with a whip until you stand and face him in the end" (77). William would not be surprised by God, or by Coyote either who, he says, "would jump on a man when his back was turned" (77). Ara knows that this landscape is not graced:

> Even God's eye could not spy out the men lost here already, Ara thought. He had looked mercifully on the people of Nineveh though they did not know their right hand and their left. But there were not enough people here to attract his attention. The cattle were scrub cattle. The men lay like sift in the cracks of the earth. (22-23)

And so this place and these people live under Coyote's eye. Any meaning the landscape possesses comes from him: "Coyote made the land his pastime. He stretched out his paw. He breathed on the grass. His spittle eyed it with prickly pear" (22). The meaning Coyote gives is playful, arbitrary, absurd. The threat of his eye and voice haunts the landscape as he calls from the hills and works in the imaginations of the people there:

> Above on the hills
> Coyote's voice rose among the rocks:
> In my mouth is forgetting
> In my darkness is rest. (29)

There is no immunity from Coyote--his threat and his temptation into darkness and oblivion are real for all the figures in the work: "Coyote reaching out reflected glory. Like a fire to warm. Then shoving the brand between a man's teeth right into his belly's pit. Fear making mischief. Laying traps for men. The dog and his servants plaguing the earth" (61).

Coyote acts principally through his servants, the old lady and Kip. Like Coyote, the "old lady was there in every fold of the country" (43) and Kip embodies a vague threat as he rides the valley and sees too much:

> What in hell are you doing? said the boy.

> Looking, said Kip.
> Get out of here, the boy said. Wherever you are there's trouble. If a man is breaking a horse when you come round it hangs itself on the halter, or throws itself, or gets out and back on the range. Take your message back where it came from. (27)

Kip hears Coyote's call in the thunder; the old lady defies both God and human agency as she is repeatedly seen fishing the creek after her death.

Coyote's bewitching of nature and his spell over the old lady and Kip are tied to the silence that has settled over the community. This is a distorted world in which rituals are empty of significance, words have lost meaning, and speech has stopped: "This is the way they'd lived. Suspended in silence. When they spoke they spoke of hammers and buckles, of water for washing, of rotted posts, of ringbone and distemper " (43). Watson uses fragments of the discarded rituals that once organized the community to emphasize its decay by showing them to be as meaningless as the modern clichés to which they are juxtaposed. The sacred rituals have been replaced by "Put your horse in," "Pull up," "What the hell" (51). Felix has only bits of the mass left in his memory, and mixes them with the apparently equally significant "Scatter" and "Get-the-hell-out" (51). He very quickly comes to the end of his saying (51), the limits of his language, and lapses into silence. There is no longer a universal language, or even common understandings. Felix and his neighbours are not a community, and cannot be nailed together like boards

(86)--they exist without perception or meaningful speech in a condition of violence and insensibility. They have no ability to communicate because they have found nothing to replace the myths and rituals which might have bound them together. The ritual ways of expression are detached from their original emotional and spiritual meaning,[7] and have become totally irrelevant. The symbolic universe is absent for these people, and the legitimacy of their institutional order and identity in question.[8] With the loss of their rituals, both native and European, the people have lost their protection against the threat of the place and its associated non-meaning. The mythic structure is lost and the events in town show just how narrow the community has become.[9]

The community and its language are in a state of decomposition. Words do not mean, or at least not what they are expected to--the transmission between the text and the reader is blocked by the disconnection of signifier and signified. The language itself neither contains nor controls meaning: its suggestions of significance are inexhaustible as language is pressed and compressed to the furthest possibilities of meaning. Words do not mean, because Watson suggests they could mean anything. Whether language itself or its transmission fails, the

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[7] Godard, " 'Between One Cliché and Another'," p. 153.

[8] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 97-100.

[9] Meyer and O'Riordan, "It's What You Say," p. 163.

result is the same: the movement is toward non-meaning and silence. The alternative to silence in the work is the meaningless sound in which the entire community is trapped with the Widow, who calls on God while denying communication and contact: "Dear God, she cried. Then she stopped short. Afraid that he might come" (55). William gives "half a dozen reasons for anything" and disallows meaning entirely by his assertion that "thread has a hundred uses. When it comes down to it, he'd say, there's no telling what thread is for" (21). Kip appears to act as a messenger but loses the words James sends to Lenchen, or at least refuses to deliver them without something to "oil up a man's mind" (62). Ara sees much but says little; James and Greta use words to drive Lenchen away. There are no fixed limits or relationships of words and meaning--language does not explain, or even describe the old lady's activity as she lights her lamp at noon and fishes upstream to the source. Rather, it increases the mystery that surrounds her: "She's here" is spoken three times, for three sightings of the old lady, in three different places on the creek, all while she is lying dead in her bed. Even the landscape is "noisy and restless in its silence" (53).

Only language can make this place meaningful. Landscape is a meaningless and formless threat--it defies human order and rationality, as does human action--until it is brought into a human context by language and ritual which order and organize both a landscape and a community. When meaning is present and articulated a foolhen becomes a phoenix: the environment achieves

meaning by being placed in a symbolic framework. By invoking that framework Watson transforms the environment from nothingness, absence, and as much significance as an apron dropped wrinkled like the earth on the bare floor of the world (22), to a meaningful structure filled with a powerful presence that Heinrich can intuit but not express or understand:

> In the sky above darkness had overlaid light. But the boy knew as well as he knew anything that until the hills fell on him or the ground sucked him in the light would come again. He had tried to hold darkness to him, but it grew thin and formless and took shape as something else. He could keep his eyes shut after the night, but it would be light he knew. Light would be flaming off the bay mare's coat. Light would be kindling on the fish in the dark pools. (44)

What Heinrich knows has to do with the white glory of the moon for which Kip thirsts, but it must be translated. Translation into a human framework deprives it of its threat, which Theophil has answered with insensibility[10] and disbelief: he has decided that "it's better for the eyes to close" (56) and that "[T]here's no big Coyote, like you think. There's not just one of him. He's everywhere. The government's got his number too. They've set a bounty on him at fifty cents a brush" (57).

Watson shows what can happen when the use of language is wrong: in The Double Hook words are used without regard for their power. The use of language must be authentic and careful or a

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[10] Stephen Scobie calls Theophil's insensibility terminal (Sheila Watson and Her Works, p. 25).

parrot and its words will figure as significantly as a human being, and a road will continue to lead only to this or that. Watson knows that the connection between signifier and signified must be maintained, and that the limits of language are indeed the limits of the world.[11] Ultimately, inauthentic meanings destroy a community and a culture more finally than silence ever could. As Watson herself puts it:

> I don't think words are innocent. Sometimes the impact of words on a reader is not what the writer expects at all....Words are not simple exchange. They are charged. They have all sorts of possibilities which may explode at any moment....literature is not innocent because it has the power to produce a disequilibrium in your life....a violation, a transgression of sensibility....man is freed from his animal condition but he is freed into a more perilous condition through language.[12]

One aspect of that perilous condition is the irrefutable power of language. In this text words can kill: the old lady is "[p]ushed.... By James's words" (19). When James returns from the town below he has been freed from the freedom he gained when he tried to escape from his mother, Coyote, and his responsibility to his family. His new condition has an increased potential for both life and disaster: riding into the first pasture of things with plans for his new home he may well be starting the whole

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[11] Ludwig Wittgenstein, quoted in Philip Thody, Roland Barthes: A Conservative Estimate (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 15.

[12] Meyer and O'Riordan, "It's What You Say," pp. 162-163.

cycle of self-destruction all over again, with memory held like a knife in his hand, clasped shut (127). Neither is it clear that Coyote has released him. As William, Heinrich, and Ara wait outside the smoking ruins of the house they hear a voice in the hills:

> Above them a coyote barked. This time they could see it on a jut of rock calling down over the ledge so that the walls of the valley magnified its voice and sent it echoing back:
>
> Happy are the dead
> for their eyes see no more.
> (114-115) [my emphasis]

The danger in language and its potential misuse depend upon who—or what—uses it. With his capacity for speech Coyote denies the limits of animal, human, and supernatural; he denies language, the defining characteristic of the human, as well. Coyote's words curiously mean and do not mean in two registers: the Scriptures from which they come, and the trickster legend from which he comes. His speech pulls human language and human being to the edge, with the equal promise of revelation or annihilation. The parrot's ability to speak has a similar effect on the text. Since Watson has put the weight of meaning on structure, and uses language as a register of structure, both the parrot and Coyote threaten the structure of existence by defying definition and placement. When the meaning of sentences disappears the meaning of human being is threatened. In Part 4 the parrot's use of language, even in rote repetition, is as effective as the townspeople's:

> The parrot swung itself below the inside edge of the counter and came up with a tin mug in one claw.
> Drinks on you, it said....
> James looked up. The parrot seemed to be watching him over the rim of its mug.
> She was old, James said, speaking to the parrot. (100-101)

The fact that the parrot speaks at all threatens to crumble the entire structure of the work and of meaning—the world is truly absurd and the definition of human being under siege. The differences between human and animal, meaning and non-meaning, are not at all clear or assured: the usurpation of a human faculty by an animal threatens to undo the structure and meaning of the world and leave Watson's figures not only firmly attached to their ground but buried, dead and silent, in it.[13]

When Heinrich, Felix, and Angel have realized that it is only in language that they can build a new community out of the ashes and make human meaning in an unpeopled world, they must find out how to do it. Watson has her cry of voices[14] come into language, place themselves, and create their world by assembling the bits of cultures and rituals they still possess: cloth from Europe, forgiveness from the mass, and a benediction from Coyote:

> I have set his feet on soft ground;
> I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders
> of the world. (134)

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[13] If the parrot's language is taken as a parody of human speech, which it is as well, the result is the same.

[14] Meyer and O'Riordan, "It's What You Say," p. 158.

Heinrich at first does not know how to speak to James about his sister, and does not know how to use words: "How could he say that the earth scorched his foot. That he must become ash and be born into a light which burned but did not destroy" (81). When he finally uses words to break the silence it is too late—James has already left and Lenchen has disappeared: "Can a man speak to no one because he's a man? Who says so? Those who want to be sheltered by his silence. I've held my tongue, he said, when I should have used my voice like an axe to cut down the wall between us" (82). Similarly, Felix's blessed peace threatens to become the silence of the damned when he is sought out by both Lenchen and Kip. He goes for Angel, realizing that he needs words to ask for her help: "All the way up the road he'd been trying to form the words. Peace be with you, he said" (78). He makes his "Pax vobiscum" and "Angel, I need you" break his silence: the perception of words changes[15] to make them new and meaningful again. James turns his back on silence and meaningless speech after speaking to the parrot about his mother's death. He knows that he must speak—has known since before his flight below. His first words on his return are "Lenchen....I left her here" (131). He comes as close to the truth as he can in a system of language and meaning within fixed boundaries:

> James turned to the boy. What could he say of the light that had made him want to drink fire into his darkness. Of the

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[15] Godard, " 'Between One Cliché and Another'," p. 157.

> child got between the leafless trees when the frost was stiff in the branches. Of beating up Kip and running off because Kip had been playing round with the glory of the world.
>
> I ran away, he said, but I circled and ended here the way a man does when he's lost. (132)

The figures discover—unearth[16]—a language from the fragments of intertexts, and use it to come to a new sense of community. When the pieces of language and ritual are recovered and meaning restored to and within the work, the community is restored as well: only in community can meaning be shared. Watson would have us believe that this world is newly formed from the land laid waste by the fire of righteousness which the old lady was willing to defy:

> In the emptiness of the fenced plot the bodies of the man and the boy seemed to occupy space which, too, should have been empty. The lank body of William and the thin body of the boy roped him [James] to the present. He shut his eyes. In his mind now he could see only the seared and smouldering earth, the bare hot cinder of a still unpeopled world. He felt as he stood with his eyes closed on the destruction of what his heart had wished destroyed that by some generous gesture he had been turned once more into the first pasture of things.
>
> I will build the new house further down the creek, he thought. All on one floor. (131)

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16 Rudy Wiebe uses "unearth" in his dedication to The Temptations of Big Bear (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), which Robert Kroetsch points out in "Unearthing Language: An Interview with Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch" (Shirley Neuman, in A Voice in the Land: Essays By and About Rudy Wiebe, ed. W. J. Keith [Edmonton: NeWest, 1981], p. 230).

On one level this ending appears to be positive. The characters seem to be genuinely transformed: "If he [Felix] could only shed his flesh, moult and feather again, he might begin once more. His eyelids dropped. His flesh melted. He rose from the bed on soft owl wings. And below he saw his old body crouched down like an ox by the manger" (126). He and the other figures come into speech, using words that are redeemed from cliché, and specifically tied to a concrete meaning rather than the abstract "thing" which dots the earlier part of the text. Even the Widow's lamentations are directed outward and signal determination rather than despair:

> Dear God, said the Widow, it's a feeble cry. Quick. Quick, she called and clambered down from the box as Ara pulled the horses to a stop before the door....
> The Widow's hand was on the knob....Dear God, she said, the latch needs oil. (130)

But Watson goes too far: when she disallows the question of discrepancy between sign and referent, the novel shifts away from language to plot. The characters become as concrete as their language--even Felix, who earlier signified the spiritual memory of the hill people, becomes a pragmatist: "When a house is full of women and children, Felix said, a man has to get something for their mouths" (133). Watson makes explicit in the naming of the characters—Felix, Theophil, Angel—that their function is more than simply to advance the plot, and that a traditional novel is not her intention. During the early part of the work the characters are emblematic figures, but when the direction of the

novel begins to change they perform more traditionally to carry the themes of the work--community regeneration, meaningful communication, the possibility of new and enriched life with the birth of the second Felix. This transformation is not completely satisfactory: now Felix fishes only to feed the people in his house and Kip is reduced to the ordinary--with the loss of his sight he loses his connection to Coyote's power of darkness and glory: "Who'll see things now, she [Angel] said. The bugs. The flowers. The bits of striped stone" (117). The central issue of The Double Hook is framed in the meaning of words, or its absence, and the resolution is expected there as well. The novel's resolution, however, is uneasy. Although the tenor of the final section is of positive regeneration and communication, the last words come from Coyote who threatens once more to dislodge the foundations of human being.

The effect of the text comes from Watson's manipulation of language: the mixing of registers and juxtaposition of literal and figurative language, and the peculiar way that the non-narrated language moves between the two. The questions raised by that manipulation of language are not resolved by the ending. The text subverts our notions of formal closure, and challenges both form and meaning. The text also subverts our assumptions regarding God, nature, order, language; it admits the possibility of free play, without closure; it raises the problem of signification; it allows both structure and interplay in the gap

between signifier and signified.[17] Formally the problems are resolved--the five-act drama moves to its conclusion, a conventional comic ending. The problems of language, however, remain. Language is unstable, and functions contradictorily: the attraction toward the pleasure of the text and its aesthetic effects conflicts with the desire to make language the servant of meaning. Watson is on both sides, in her determination both to play and to privilege language. She is unwilling to interpret the world solely as language: there remains the temptation to fix meaning and relation, and to construct the world of something "real"[18] at the same time as she explodes our perceptions of place and objects. Watson and the reader must restrain as well as confront both language itself, and our expectations of language.

Because the aims and directions of the work are divided, the conclusion is as well. The existence of the second Felix ensures that the resurrected traditions of the community will be transmitted to the next generation, and the narrative is concluded. The Double Hook thus ends by making sense, but of a different puzzle than Watson set out to explore. She shows the possibility, necessity, and method of unravelling the world but

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[17] Julia Kristeva, Desire in Language, 1977 and 1979; ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 128.

[18] Gaile McGregor draws on Geoffrey Durrant's comments about Malcolm Lowry for her argument on this point. (The Wacousta Syndrome [Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1985] pp. 343-344).

refuses to reduce the proposition to nothing--she disintegrates the world but stops before she reaches what might or might not furnish the meaning it needs to be rebuilt--degree zero, a final and fatal ending.[19] The need to make sense is acute, but the sense Watson almost reaches in her exploration of language is non-sense. Hers is not a neutral or uninterested investigation of the possibility of human language and human being: much is at stake for her in the enterprise. Although she appears to be questioning discourse[20] rather than meaning, she links them in a relationship of interdependence; thus when discourse threatens to collapse, meaning is under siege as well. Watson and her text are under tremendous pressure to avoid what, in the context she has created, would be an apocalyptic ending. A fictive concord of the beginning and end is necessary to prevent that and, in so doing, to restore the text to meaning. The direction Watson finds herself taking does not permit that concord and she changes her

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[19] Whether or not this is the case in "And the Four Animals" is open to question. A new genesis is less certain than the apocalypse with which the story ends. The watcher, who is also the landscape and the eye, both focusses the four ebony dogs into being and destroys them by feeding their parts to each other, until they are reduced to one tooth which he hides in his own belly. The watcher may be a god who will re-enact creation by divine force or a human who will re-enact creation by human imagination. See Shirley Neuman, "Sheila Watson," Profiles in Canadian Literature, vol. 4, ed. Jeffrey M. Heath (Toronto and Charlottetown: Dundurn Press Ltd., 1982), pp. 45-52. Stephen Scobie also discusses "And the Four Animals" and argues that it stands as an introduction or prologue to The Double Hook, in Sheila Watson and Her Works, pp. 18-29.

[20] See my discussion of discourse in the Introduction, above.

focus in an attempt to reconcile the two opposing directions that her interests--discourse and meaning--take.

By the close of the novel the intense search for meaning, the precarious setting on soft ground, and the fascination with language have disappeared. Watson's use of language has been more than simply playful, and her attempt to defuse it of her deadly seriousness is not successful: the meddling with the foundation of the world and with human being still frets around the edges of the work. Signifier and signified are linked, although there is no guarantee that the connection will not float apart again. Questions remain which will only be answered as Watson's figures again and again force signifier and signified together, use words carefully and precisely, and ensure that their new world continues to rise from the ashes, with the phoenix and the foolhen. James, Ara, and the rest still live under Coyote's eye and in the echo of his voice: "I have set his feet on soft ground" is no more reassuring than "In my darkness is rest." At least now they have words to counter his threat, a language that means at least as much as his does, although Watson warns that the struggle against silence will have to be continually re-fought.

The problem in the ending is that Watson lets the narrative take over from the theoretical concerns of the text. Although the plot is satisfactorily resolved, that resolution cannot hold for the questions of language and meaning she has raised. The result of the inquiry into language that she initiates is intense epistemological questioning. I do not mean to make too much of

the problems I perceive in the novel's resolution: despite the tension caused by Watson's philosophical and aesthetic conflict regarding closure, The Double Hook is a wonderfully rich text, and a careful demonstration of the process of creating place and social structure in language. But the conflict caused by Watson's interest in both discourse and meaning must be emphasized because it reveals the most important thing about the text, for my purposes at least. Its tension provokes questions of being, knowing, and meaning on a personal, community, and cultural level. The only answers possible are silence and insensibility because language and symbolic frameworks are already lost. All societies are constructions in the face of chaos:[21] in The Double Hook the construction has dissolved. The dread which is actualized when collapse is imminent is the point where we enter the text: matricide provokes the terror of chaos. There is no longer a symbolic universe to draw on--the cosmos does not signify the validity of human existence, and reality is not humanly meaningful.[22] The machineries of universe-maintenance[23] are not functioning--all truths are individual, and the result is confusion and solipsism.

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[21] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 103.

[22] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, pp. 103-104.

[23] Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, p. 104.

The Double Hook questions the fundamental structures of being: Watson's concerns go beyond anthropology to ontology. As Foucault would have it, art reflects not nature but contemporary thought structures--not what but the way of seeing determines our reality.[24] Phenomena exist in our methods of conceiving and understanding them--a mental world of ideas, meaning, and language comes into being with our figuration of reality. The world is preformed by language: we live with objects only as language presents them.[25] Watson investigates the conceptualizing process--not only how we make sense of writing, but how writing makes sense of the world: an epistemological inquiry at a second remove. If a given culture is only as strong as its power to convince its least dedicated member that its fictions are truths,[26] there is no culture or community left in The Double Hook: Theophil, and even Ara, remain sceptical of the veracity of accepted wisdom. Fictions and truths are purely individual and unsustaining--the possibility rather than guarantee of being, and meaning, is all that remains.

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[24] See p. 65 above. This informs Foucault's analysis of culture: what we think we see and understand as "truth" or "reality" is a function of the official discourse, which in turn is the basis of our knowledge and the language we have for its expression. The discourse-knowledge-language relationship is complex. To put it in Berger and Luckmann's terms, we construct our own reality.

[25] Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1946), p. 28.

[26] Hayden White, "The Forms of Wildness," The Wild Man Within, ed. Dudley and Novak, p. 6.

The crisis in the text is keyed to language, but the solution is hard-won. Through language Watson and her figures wrestle themselves and their environment out of the void of meaninglessness: the transformation wrought by meaningful speech is enormous. The people and even the place move into a discourse distinct from their earlier noisy and restless silence. That silence has figured the disjunction between language and meaning, and is caused by the disjunction between forms of experience and cultural organization. Watson's figures are somewhere between--between the indigenous myths which people the hills with the trickster, and the Christian tradition which gives them both an avenging Old Testament Jehovah and the poetry of the mass and the Psalms. The merging of myths and rituals produces a trickster who speaks in the rhythms of the Scriptures and a Coyote-like Jehovah with a whip in his hand. The confusion of traditions is destructive as it negates rather than creates new meaning, and causes disorientation, the loss of meaning, and silence. The community is caught between methods of social structuring which are in flux and unsustaining because of their indeterminacy. Rituals fragment and ordering collapses; structures are seen to be empty of meaning. Silence--the zero zone of language--necessarily accompanies the state of suspension between cultures and the corresponding moral and philosophical stillpoint, the zero degree of humanity which results from this profound alienation which is signalled by intelligible discourse in the mouth of a parrot. The

need is to create both framework and content, to bestow meaning on a new world: language invents the world.

For Watson the questions of how you speak and how you make a social place--how you put Canada into discourse--go beyond regional and national concerns to an interrogation of language and writing itself. In her terms the problem is more properly the meaning that language can grant or deny, and is enormously charged with the questions of structure, of content, of what is central for a culture to know. If, as Foucault suggests, we turn all social arrangements into discourse,[27] the question of how the discourse of Canadian literature reflects this country's social arrangements is answered in The Double Hook. Watson shows very clearly the difficult process of retaining or replacing givens, of accommodating the contents of different histories into a relationship with each other while maintaining a delicate balance in a world that threatens to disintegrate under the extreme pressure of that activity. If in Richardson's work the radical interrogation of structures led to their collapse, surely the threat is no less real in The Double Hook.

The Double Hook addresses directly the new world phenomenon and the break from Europe, the loss in the transferral from the old world and the essential discontinuity between the lives lived

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[27] Much of Foucault's published work focusses on the organization of culture and power into often opposing discourses. See, for example, Madness and Civilization (1961; trans. 1965.), Discipline and Punish (1975; trans. 1977), The History of Sexuality (1976; trans. 1978). See also my discussion in the Introduction, above.

in that place and those lived in other places. She shows that the images of the world which language provided simply by being in that other place are not authentic in the new setting, and the loss of the established, in-place social structure, the world-in-itself phenomenon as well. She also addresses the other side of the equation, what Robertson calls the experience of occupation--having to come to terms with or perish at the hands of a migrating culture.[28] The loss of history, memory, belonging, and language is equally disorienting and as potentially fatal for the indigenous culture which has suffered from the European refusal to acknowledge its existence and validity:

> I was concerned too, in another sort of way I suppose, with the problem of an indigenous population which had lost or was losing its own mythic structure, which had had its images destroyed, its myths interpreted for it by various missionary societies and later by anthropologists--a group intermarried or intermingled with people of other beliefs--French Catholics who had come into the West with the Hudson Bay Company, Biblical puritanical elements--all now virtually isolated from their source.[29]

Which is not to say that The Double Hook is an ethnic novel, or was intended to be.[30] Rather, it is written with an awareness of the complicated procedures on many levels that a new society in a new place must negotiate in order to make some meaning of itself.

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[28] Robertson, "My Own Country," p. 77.

[29] Meyer and O'Riordan, "It's What You Say," p. 159.

[30] Meyer and O'Riordan, "It's What You Say," p. 159.

A crucial aspect of the transferral from old to new world is the threatened and actual collapse into silence and invisibility which the figures in the work so completely enact. Their liminal existence, and the extreme disruption of surface patterns of myth, kinship, and language show the excessive degree of consciousness which such structures are afforded in this culture: they are not simply laid bare, but are absent. In the old world these structures retain content; in the new world there is only the imperative that they be re-created.

In a fragment culture the symbolic actions which were once the basis of human meaning have been neutralized by time and displacement, and no longer function as either articulation or defence in a situation in which they are extraneous, irrelevant, and unconnected. The building of traditions requires the time, history and continuity that a new society does not have. It also requires the transformation of history into myth. When a society loses its history, rituals, and language, it loses its balance--the distinction between metaphysical and material blurs. The choice of the right word requires contact between individual and experience, which is uncertain in a fragment culture. The new culture must undergo a process of recuperation of both language and meaning to regain visibility in a landscape, and make a social and historical frame in a place which has denied its existence.

The Double Hook shows how the questions of Canada and human being are tied to language. Watson avoids the distinctive historical and social framework to which the Canadian imagination

is so often leased, and the modes of writing which locate us externally,[31] and refuses to posit Canada as a secure social structure with eternity in place. We are thrown back to our beginning--literally, the Word, with the old lady's act of inscription. But there is no salvation in this word, no guarantee of transformation: the interdependent association of discourse and meaning ensures that when the meaning of a sentence disappears the meaning of human being does as well. This condition of the text comes near to undoing the reader, as well as the text and the issues it has raised. The reader is in the same realm of meaning as story is,[32] and is thus implicated in these complicated transactions and transitions between meaningful existence and annihilation. This extension makes the text mean for us: we exist in the same valley, the same insubstantial world, and need to find a meaning in it just as the fictional figures do. The world Watson undercuts is our own: there is no circular completion here, but a flat disc which threatens to tip and slide us off its edge to nowhere.

The "meaning" of The Double Hook circles back to language and form in a curiously doubled way. Experience and reality exist as experience and reality only when they are translated by formal means into the terms of a symbolic universe, and are then re-

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[31] McGregor, The Wacousta Syndrome, p. 324.

[32] George Bowering, "Sheila Watson, Trickster," The Mask in Place: Essays on Fiction in North America (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1982), p. 109.

expressed in those terms, in language or ritual. They have to be made meaningful, to be mediated and translated, but in the translation they may be lost, particularly if the symbolic universe or its terms are not shared--a double hook indeed. The process of translation is visible in The Double Hook, as are the near misses, the absences of signification. When it works, reality is intensified as meaning is created in the text as a product of form.[33] The figure of the author is emphasized--Watson's manipulation of the figures and the language in which they exist[34] is not only overt but celebrated, which is how Watson makes language both the subject and form of the work.

The Double Hook does not perform a mimetic or representational function: its language does not mirror a political, social, or psychological reality,[35] and the mimesis of Part 4 is parody. Although Watson creates some remarkably tangible and "real" images in the work, they have nothing to do with realism--there is no illusion that she sets up the characters to watch them play out the action of the work. It depends entirely on its verbal structure.[36] At the end of the work it is not reality that has been transformed, but the way it is

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[33] Jan Marta, "Poetic Structures in the Prose Fiction of Sheila Watson," Essays on Canadian Writing, no. 17 (Spring 1980), pp. 44-45.

[34] Bowering, "Sheila Watson, Trickster," p. 100.

[35] Godard, " 'Between One Cliché and Another'," p. 152.

[36] Meyer and O'Riordan, "It's What You Say," p. 164.

understood.[37] Reality and meaning are not perceived, but must be made, and in language, which must itself be invented--or re-invented, as Robert Kroetsch would have it. The Double Hook does just that: it mediates between the glory and the darkness, without denying or endorsing either. The threat of the slide into non-meaning is countered when the language sounds perfectly. For the rest, we too are set on soft ground.

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[37] John Moss, Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 170.

FIVE: KROETSCH

RE-INVENTING THE PLACE

Of the writers examined here Robert Kroetsch has made most use of the idea of the invention of Canada. For him Canada, and especially the Canadian West, is nothing if not an idea; to use Henry Kreisel's words, it is a state of mind.[1] Much of Kroetsch's writing comes out of that idea: he is convinced that we can--must--make a new literature out of the new experience,[2] new land, new place, and new language. His writing relies heavily on the oral tradition: the open-ended retelling of stories.[3] Kroetsch says "[t]he oral tradition, become a literary tradition, points us back to our own landscape, our recent ancestors, and the characteristic expressions and modes of our own speech."[4] He also uses the tall tale, which Peter Thomas calls the narrative form of

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[1] Henry Kreisel, "The Prairie: A State of Mind," 1968; rpt. Contexts of Canadian Criticism, ed. Eli Mandel (1971; rpt. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977), pp. 254-266.

[2] Robert Kroetsch, "A Conversation with Margaret Laurence, in Creation, ed. Robert Kroetsch, James Bacque, and Pierre Gravel (Toronto and Chicago: New Press, 1970), p. 53. All further references to this work (Creation) appear in the text.

[3] Robert Lecker, "Bordering On: Robert Kroetsch's Aesthetic," Journal of Canadian Studies, 17, no. 3 (Fall 1982), p. 129.

[4] Robert Kroetsch, "On Being An Alberta Writer," in "Robert Kroetsch: Essays," Open Letter, 5th ser., no. 4 (Spring 1983), p. 76. All further references to this work ("Alberta Writer") appear in the text.

absence.[5] Kroetsch emphasizes the relationship between language and being, between identity and story-telling:[6] the fiction makes us real (Creation, p. 63, my emphasis).

These formal considerations introduce the concerns of Kroetsch's writing which are important here, both in themselves and as they show his interest in form and structure. In his fiction Canada is a tall tale world where rules of logic do not apply. The new system of order is created out of a curious blend of Kroetsch's imagination, his literary aesthetic, and the facts of existence in this place: the overpowering landscape, the presence of different ethnic groups, the relatively recent settlement, and the absence of memories of the new country. Kroetsch creates Alberta in his writing--a fictional, verbal construct. His theoretical awareness of the significance, possibilities, and limits of that literary and social construction is developed in the dialogue that occurs between his literary texts and his critical writing. Fiction is the subject of his fiction.[7] He uses the idea of the critical act as a way to write

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[5] Peter Thomas, "Robert Kroetsch and Silence," Essays on Canadian Writing, 18/19 (Summer/Fall 1980), p. 49.

[6] Lecker, "Bordering On," p. 127.

[7] Louis MacKendrick, "Robert Kroetsch and the Modern Canadian Novel of Exhaustion," Essays on Canadian Writing, 11 (Summer 1978), p. 10.

fiction:[8] Gone Indian is a novel made out of Madham's commentary on Jeremy's taped text. Language and formal structures are clearly part of the story.[9] In Kroetsch's own words, the writer's task is not to write up the experience of a country but to articulate the forms of its fiction; Kroetsch's doubled performance of writing and criticism retells the tale.[10]

Kroetsch has helped to change the idea of writing in Canada. As he puts it, he does violence to form by resisting its conventions and traditions, such as realism and closure, and he points out that Richardson did a similar violence by trying to violate his material into a story.[11] Kroetsch refuses to allow language to get in the way of story ("Porcupine," p. 57), or to allow our ideas of history to impede writing: he explodes the conventions of the land and its settlement, and of writing about it. Much Canadian writing has foundered on the determination to use "real" historical material and to see meaning, ideals,

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[8] Geoff Hancock, "An Interview with Robert Kroetsch," Canadian Fiction Magazine, nos. 24/25 (Spring/Summer 1977), p. 40. All further references to this work (Hancock, "Interview") appear in the text.

[9] Hancock, "Magic Realism, or, the Future of Fiction," Canadian Fiction Magazine, nos. 24/25 (Spring/Summer 1977)," p. 5.

[10] Robert Kroetsch, "Contemporary Standards in the Canadian Novel," Essays on Canadian Writing, 20 (Winter 1980-81), pp. 26-27, my emphasis. All further references to this work ("Standards") appear in the text.

[11] Robert Kroetsch, "The Exploding Porcupine: Violence of Form in English-Canadian Fiction," in "Robert Kroetsch: Essays," Open Letter, 5th ser., no. 4 (Spring 1983), pp. 57-58. All further references to this work ("Porcupine") appear in the text.

accomplishments, and coherence in that material.[12] Kroetsch says that the experience may have seemed harsh because the realistic (or naturalistic) mode of fiction pictured it so, which would result in the difference between the actual condition and the construct or fiction ("Alberta Writer," pp. 74-75). Kroetsch not only refuses to follow those examples but undoes what has gone before and brings us back to the beginning: Gone Indian, his fourth novel, must have an ambivalent ending because existence here is ambivalent.

Kroetsch uses archeology as a metaphor to describe his use of the past. Archaeology operates against history--the authorized version, the given definition that betrays us. Both the past and the place are archeological sites to be mined for fragments which make their own demands for shaping, telling, and imagining.[13] Archaeology accepts the violence of the discontinuity of form ("Porcupine," p. 60) and allows for the fragmented nature of the story rather than the coerced unity of traditional history ("Alberta Writer," p. 76). Like Foucault, Kroetsch uses archeology to generate the rules of his discourse by posing his as

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[12] Here I am thinking particularly of Edward McCourt's fiction and criticism. His view, however, is not isolated.

[13] Shirley Neuman and Robert Wilson, Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), p. 167. All further references to this work (Labyrinths) appear in the text.

an alternative to historical discourse.[14] The archaeological metaphor signals his determination to investigate place.

The investigation of place takes many forms: fiction, poetry, criticism, commentary. Kroetsch makes the place in language, and in the process undoes conventions of both place and literature. The tension between form, reality, and perception is the same for Kroetsch as it was for Richardson. These writers describe the parameters of this study because so much of Kroetsch's exploration circles back to the questions raised by Richardson's work. As was Richardson in his time, so Kroetsch now is faced with a discrepancy between form and language on the one hand, and place and experience on the other. Kroetsch denies the convention that the novel is not a fiction by engaging the reader in the fiction-making process (Hancock, "Interview," p. 42). The fiction becomes fiction: the word is no longer connected to the world.[15] The question Kroetsch asks of writing, and we ask of him is whether the world makes writing possible, or if writing makes the world.[16] The answer seems to be both. As Kroetsch has it, we

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[14] Donna Bennett disagrees; see "Weathercock: The Directions of Report," in "Reflections: Essays on Robert Kroetsch," Open Letter, 5th ser., nos. 8-9 (Summer-Fall 1984), p. 134.

[15] Robert Kroetsch and Diane Bessai, "Death is a Happy Ending: A dialogue in thirteen parts," in Figures in a Ground, ed. Diane Bessai and David Jackel (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p. 210. All further references to this work ("Death") appear in the text.

[16] Robert Lecker, "Robert Kroetsch's Poetry," Open Letter, 3rd ser., no. 8 (Spring 1978), p. 84.

create the world by naming it: the translation into fiction makes our identity and experience real.

The relationship between form and place remains the problem: it is place, this place, that traditional literary form first must deal with, and cannot. Canadians and Canadian writers have no grammar of fiction to use on this very un-European space. The first writers in a culture have to deal with both the space and the lack of a way to talk about it.[17] The results are often less than literary masterpieces—it could not be otherwise. The first explorers of this country literally could not see it[18] because they had no form in which to accommodate it intellectually: Kroetsch holds that without literary models we can only play off against the literal object.[19] Language--the word as eye--does not help because as Kroetsch puts it, "[f]or a long time, the EYES did not have it."[20] Despite his antecedents in Upper Canada Richardson literally did not know where he was—his equating of a common with a "small prairie" signals that he did not know how to

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17 Flemming Brahms, "Robert Kroetsch: Interview," Kunapipi, 2, no. 2 (1980), p. 123.

18 See Dick Harrison's account of travel literature in Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977), chapter I.

19 Russell Brown, "An Interview with Robert Kroetsch," University of Windsor Review, 7, no. 2 (Spring 1972), p. 7. All further references to this work (Brown, "Interview") appear in the text.

20 Kroetsch, "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues," in "Robert Kroetsch: Essays," Open Letter, 5th ser., no. 4 (Spring 1983), p. 28. All further references to this work ("Discovery") appear in the text.

speak of it either.[21] Richardson's usage raises the question of meaning in that naming and in every other.

Kroetsch exemplifies the post-modern writer's loss of faith in the traditional imaginative forms and in the stability of the structures of language.[22] In "Unhiding the Hidden" he discusses the problems Canada and Canadians have using language, pointing out that on a literal level the use of words from elsewhere, in our case usually Britain or the United States, involves imposing a meaning on our experience which is not authentic: "Heidegger says in his Poetry, Language, Thought: 'Roman thought takes over the Greek words without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say, without the Greek word. The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation.' "[23] The meaning that the imported word brings with it covers up the meaning of here that it is supposed to express. We control and lose the world by naming it: the name replaces what it is meant to represent (Hancock, "Interview," p. 40). If our vocabulary consists of inauthentic language, our literature cannot reflect our own experience. For Kroetsch language is both necessary and necessarily wrong: as Peter Thomas puts it, words falsify and

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[21] Wacousta (I, p. 19).

[22] Peter Thomas, "Robert Kroetsch and Silence," Essays on Canadian Writing, nos. 18/19 (Summer/Fall 1980), pp. 36-37.

[23] Robert Kroetsch, "Unhiding the Hidden: Recent Canadian Fiction," in "Robert Kroetsch: Essays," Open Letter, 5th ser., no. 4 (Spring 1983), p. 17. All further references to this work ("Unhiding") appear in the text.

disguise as much as they reveal and discover.[24] In using the language from elsewhere the narrator fakes not only a personal identity but an adherence to a social order; thus when the narrative stance is disrupted as in Gone Indian, the narrative is too. A problem of language is a problem of culture, society, identity. As in the case of Big Bear, the official language fails to confront reality ("Unhiding," p. 21). In "On Being an Alberta Writer" Kroetsch comments on the difficulty of finding names for the elements and characteristics of the western landscape. The human response to this landscape is so new, ill-defined, and complex, he says, that our writers keep coming back uneasily but compulsively to landscape writing (p. 74). He holds that naming is an act of complicity and obfuscation when one's language is controlled by alien cultures. Any naming, indigenous or foreign, invalidates itself and is therefore dangerous and false. Unnaming is necessary to resolve the tension between appearance and authenticity ("Unhiding," p. 17).

Unnaming also means the uninvention of Canada's past, the decomposition of systems of language, and the uncreation of self.[25] Kroetsch is in a doubled dilemma, as he recognizes

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[24] Thomas, "Robert Kroetsch and Silence," p. 34.

[25] Ann Mandel, "Uninventing Structures: Cultural Criticism and the Novels of Robert Kroetsch," Open Letter, 3rd ser., no. 8 (Spring 1978), p. 53.

himself: to uninvent the word is to uninvent the world.[26] He must perform the poetic act and name again. The necessity and failure of the word leads to a condition of silence and absence: the first step of Kroetsch's activity is a kind of silencing. The ultimate threat is that language and the speaker will disappear. As the poet uninvents language he uninvents himself;[27] we ask, with Kroetsch, where is the voice coming from? (Labyrinths, p. 155).

Kroetsch recognizes the seriousness of his enterprise and the consequences of unravelling the world. The double process of un-naming and naming is first a fall into silence. That silence obliterates identity, but as an artist Kroetsch must speak: he writes into and out of this tension. In "How I Joined the Seal Herd" the speaker has to talk: he becomes more sensitive to his responsibility as speaker because his survival as a human depends on it.[28] Kroetsch is obviously aware of the responsibility, but he is also aware of the play which the silent point, the zero degree allows. He is not a capital-A Author writing the "capital-W Word,"[29] although he admits that it is the artist who

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[26] Robert Kroetsch, "Introduction," Boundary 2, A Canadian Issue, vol. 3, no. 1 (Fall 1974), p. 1. All further references to this work (Boundary 2) appear in the text.

[27] Lecker, "Robert Kroetsch's Poetry," p. 86.

[28] Lecker, "Robert Kroetsch's Poetry," p. 88.

[29] Shirley Neuman "Unearthing Language: An Interview with Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch," A Voice in the Land, ed. W. J. Keith (Edmonton: NeWest, 1981), p. 236.

articulates a significance out of the tale.[30] The trick is that it is a significance, not the significance. He will not admit the reassurance of a certainty of meaning (Hancock, "Interview," p. 44) either for himself or for the reader.

Like the other writers studied here, Kroetsch negotiates the middle passage between Canada as somewhere and Canada as nowhere, in and out of silence. The difference in Kroetsch's work, though, is his attitude toward the experience: rather than writing as if his and our lives depended on it, he celebrates the possibility of the dissolution of order. He delights in the skewing of reality he achieves in his fiction by drawing on carnival.[31] Much of Kroetsch's work is informed by the ideas of carnival: a challenge of God, authority, and social law.[32] In the carnival world of absurdity, illogic, and possibility, identity is disguised, diffused, incomplete. Kroetsch sees carnival as discourse: he points out the identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law ("Carnival," p. 117). Carnival discourse breaks through the laws of a language in a social and political protest ("Carnival," p. 117) and works against determinism and rationality. The carnival promises renewal by

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30 P. L. Surette, "The Fabular Fiction of Robert Kroetsch," Canadian Literature, no. 77 (Summer 1978), p. 12.

31 In "Carnival and Violence: a Meditation," ("Robert Kroetsch: Essays," Open Letter, 5th ser., no. 4 [Spring 1983], pp. 111-122) Kroetsch acknowledges his debt to Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva.

32 Kroetsch, "Carnival and Violence," p. 114. All further references to this work ("Carnival") appear in the text.

destruction: human vitality is renewed in disorder and chaos. Sex functions as a metaphor for irrational vitality and the process of creation, which Kroetsch connects to writing (Brown, "Interview," p. 11).

Kroetsch places carnival and Western Canada in a borderland. The border is a key to Kroetsch's work: it is the point at which opposites unite and undergo a metamorphosis, and is always in the process of transformation as it defies the static structures of a fixed world.[33] Kroetsch calls Canada a borderland, literally in its position between the North and the United States, but in other ways as well: between silence and noise, between our conception of reality and surrealism. In Gone Indian Kroetsch is most interested in the border between security and diffusion of personality; in language between creating and uncreating words; in ontological terms between existence and annihilation. Rather than a creative tension between dualities, the result can be either mutual cancellation or endless repetition.[34] Kroetsch writes out of the tension between the differences posed by that border existence and expresses the border's duplicity in structure, metaphor, and theme.[35]

Kroetsch is determined to re-create language and place. As he puts it in Labyrinths of Voice: "I'm fascinated by the content

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[33] Lecker, "Bordering On," p. 125.

[34] Rosemary Sullivan, "The Fascinating Place Between: The Fiction of Robert Kroetsch," Mosaic, 11, no. 3 (Spring 1978), p. 167.

[35] Lecker, "Bordering On," p. 131.

where we are literally in a new world telling ourselves about it, making each other up, inventing each other in this new world" (p. 39). This is a precise description of his own writing, but it goes further--we invent not only each other, but the new world itself. He has documented his attempt to make language an authentic register of our place and our experience in Field Notes, a continuing poem.[36] In "Stone Hammer Poem," "The Ledger," and "Seed Catalogue," he uses physical, historical, and geographic material--the literal artifacts of our presence here--as the focus of his writing. The stone hammer is just that—a stone hammer made and used by Indians, which his grandfather found in a field and passed down through the family until it becomes a paperweight on the poet's desk, still smelling of "buffalo blood hot/ in the dying sun" (19). Just as a hand, now bone, shaped the stone, the poet's hand shapes words: "The poem / is the stone / chipped and hammered / until it is shaped / like the stone / hammer, the maul" (16). In "The Ledger" it is the account book from his grandfather's mill in Bruce County that provokes comment: in the poem Kroetsch engages in a dialogue with the dead, seeking a connectedness[37] and a settling of his own accounts with his history and his ancestors:

the poet: finding the column straight

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[36] Robert Kroetsch, Field Notes: The Collected Poetry of Robert Kroetsch, (Don Mills: General, 1981). All subsequent quotations from "Stone Hammer Poem," "The Ledger," and "Seed Catalogue" are from this edition and are cited in the text.

[37] Thomas, "Robert Kroetsch and Silence," p. 47.

in the torn ledger the column broken

FINDING

everything you write
my wife, my daughters said the book of final entry
is a search for the dead in which a record is kept.
(25)

"Seed Catalogue" is an exploration in landscape and language, of the ordering that takes place when the advertisements in a commercial seed catalogue are used to describe and define place:

> 'Of the many varieties of vegetables in existence, Cauliflower is unquestionably one of the greatest inheritances of the present generation, particularly Western Canadians. There is no place in the world where better cauliflowers can be grown than right here in the West. The finest specimens we have ever seen, larger and of better quality, are annually grown here on our prairies. Being particularly a high altitude plant it thrives to a point of perfection here, seldom seen in warmer climes.' (56)

As Kroetsch points out, garden is the wrong word in a vast, empty space: it is better suited to a European and highly urbanized landscape.[38] In Heisler, where there is only an absence rather than history and artifacts to construct a past,[39] there is little for the poet's imagination, or to answer his question of how you grow a poet. The only poem is a straight prairie road: "the shortest distance / between nowhere and nowhere" (58). The

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38 Brahms, "Robert Kroetsch: Interview," p. 122.

39 Susan Wood, "Reinventing the Word: Kroetsch's Poetry," Canadian Literature, no. 77 (Summer 1978), p. 35.

porcupine/poet is killed trying to cross that road, and leaves nothing behind but "a scarred / page, a spoor of wording" (59).[40]

In these works Kroetsch is preoccupied with the legitimacy of the artistic creation and of language itself: how do you grow a poet, a prairie town? And how substantial can either be if they are not related to the place and the experience? The problem is how we can make our place out of physical phenomena, and make a meaning out of and against that. Kroetsch believes that we create our place in language. The past has no meaning until it is dealt with--accounted for, if you will, in the writer's ledger. Occasionally the account balances: often it does not. And often the results are unexpected or inconclusive. Such is the case with his fiction. In Gone Indian we see Kroetsch, with Jeremy, inventing the northwest. The novel is an exercise in creation of self and place, a point Kroetsch makes explicit: one of Jeremy's unfinished dissertations begins with "Christopher Columbus, not knowing that he had not come to the Indies, named the inhabitants of that new world—."[41] Like Columbus, on his trip to Canada Jeremy does not really know where he has landed but soon finds out that the strangeness and possibility of the place equal, if not surpass, his expectations. His transformations, from graduate student to Grey Owl, from weakling and victim to the Winter King,

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[40] Wood, "Reinventing the Word," p. 37.

[41] Robert Kroetsch, Gone Indian (1973; rpt. Toronto: General, 1981), p. 21. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited within the text.

and from impotent human to buffalo bull are aspects of his invention of what becomes his northwest.

Jeremy defines himself in his tape recordings and the notebooks he has ready for another attempt at his dissertation. In a similar manner Madham creates himself in his letters to Jill Sunderman and his purportedly scholarly comments on Jeremy's work. Madham's definition in words may well be more significant than Jeremy's, although Jeremy seems to be the main character: everything we see and hear of him, however, is filtered through Madham's eyes and words. Madham's is the controlling consciousness of the novel, and he is clearly not reliable in the traditional sense. Of course this is part of Kroetsch's design: through Madham's slanted telling of the novel we come to question not only his assumptions and beliefs but our own perceptions, as well as the place and experience we thought we knew and understood. Madham's narration is also the source of irony and humour in the novel: "It is my own opinion that everything he [Jeremy] says can be taken at face value. He was as surprised as are we by the course of events, failing to understand, as he did, the nature of freedom" (2). Of course nothing that Madham says Jeremy says can be taken at face value, nor can Madham's comments about himself; we learn later that it is Jeremy, not Madham, who understands the nature of freedom.

Jeremy is preoccupied with the necessity of his own self-creation in language: after nine years as a graduate student in the English Department of an American university his unwritten

dissertation threatens to ruin his life--as it has his sexual performance. He has many failed attempts at the dissertation to his credit:

> 'Going Down With Orpheus.'
> Eighteen months and four hundred pages. Abandoned.
> 'The Artist as Clown and Pornographer.'
> Nine months of reading and three hundred index cards. Sold to an M.A. candidate for twenty dollars.
> 'The Columbus Quest: The Dream, the Journey, the Surprise.'
> Eighteen weeks. I couldn't get past the first sentence. (62)

Unable to write he carries a tape recorder so that, in Madham's words, "he might commit to tape the meditations and insights that would help him complete his dissertation" (J). He finally sets out on his own Columbus quest in imitation of his childhood hero, Archie Belaney. The ostensible reason for his trip west is a job interview which Madham has arranged for him "at that last university in the last city on the far, last edge of our civilization" (6). However, at the airport he answers the Customs officer's "Purpose of trip?" with "I want to be Grey Owl....I want to become--" (6). Only in Grey Owl's country--Canada--can his dream of transformation come true:

> 'Sadness,' old Madham says to me one day, 'there's only one problem in this world that you take seriously.'
> 'Right,' I said.
> 'No,' he said. 'I mean yes. Why did Archie Belaney become Grey Owl?'
> 'How,' I said. I raised my right hand, the palm facing the good professor's beaming face. Why he was sweating I do not know.

> 'The story of a man,' I agreed, 'who died into a new life.'
> 'He faked the death.'
> 'But he woke up free nevertheless.'
> 'Be serious.'
> 'One false move, Professor, and instead of addressing you, I'll be you. That's serious.' (62)

That is, of course, exactly what happens: the twist in the novel is that it is Madham's quest that Jeremy lives out. All the discussion of identity comes from Madham, who controls the content of the book by presenting his edited transcriptions of Jeremy's tapes: "Of course I have had to select from the tapes, in spite of Jeremy's instructions to the contrary: the mere onslaught of detail merely overwhelms" (13). Of course he also controls and disrupts chronological time in his presentation. Jeremy becomes real as Madham tells his story—and Madham does too. At the beginning of the novel he sums up Jeremy's motivations for the reader:

> Jeremy believed that his whole life was shaped and governed by some deep American need to seek out the frontier. A child of Manhattan, born and bred, he dreamed always a far interior that he might in the flesh inhabit. He dreamed northwest, that is undeniable. Only let me assert: it was I who sent him there. (5-6)

Madham is preoccupied with the transformation of identity because he has died into a new life. His words about Jeremy apply equally to himself: "The possibility of transformation, I must recognize, played no little part in Jeremy's abiding fantasy of fulfilment. It gave him, in the face of all his inadequacies, the illusion of

hope" (7). Madham's hope is that he can go home again, and through Jeremy he does.

The random naming of Jeremy after Jeremy Bentham is no less bizarre than Madham's assigning of his own new name: Kroetsch seems to be saying that all identity is accidental, relative, random, and changeable. Curiously Jeremy is trapped into living out "the accident of his name: that one portion of identity which is at once so totally invented and so totally real" (51)--his mother tells him that his absent father "wanted [him] to grow up...to be a professor" (52). Like Madham's, Jeremy's status is figured according to academic standards. He has yet, however, to complete his degree and become a success in Madham's terms: "Professor Madham, you did this. You sent me out here. You, with your goddamned go-get-a-job syndrome, publish, head a committee. Become a dean and die" (19). He has spent his years of graduate school being guilty about the work he is not doing, which results in his inability to perform sexually:

> Guilt. Old-fashioned guilt. Every time I lie down I feel guilty because I'm not up and studying. Work on your new dissertation, Sadness. Review for the final oral. Retake that German exam. Write that paper that's four years overdue. I'M TOTALLY GUILTY. (35)

His rebellion against his eastern life is also figured in academic standards. On his trip west he begins by reacting against Madham and the university: "Instead of doing as I instructed, he [Jeremy] used the recorder to insult everything the university must stand for" (1). Naturally enough, he addresses his tapes to

his supervisor. After missing his job interview twice he gradually surrenders himself to the principles of the new order, which results in his discarding the tape recorder and disappearing. His problem of guilt is solved in the process: he and Bea Sunderman become lovers and disappear together.

After trying to live up to his namesake, and then to his supervisor, Jeremy tries to become his own hero. Like Madham, Jeremy eventually invents his new name and makes it and his new identity real. Like the reborn Grove, Jeremy is the quintessential Kroetsch hero. He and Grove create a past while their real journey is into a future of possibility.[42] Like Grove, Jeremy is not acting out the quest for identity as the given authentic self, but the belief that the chosen fiction is the fullest and most free imaginative act.[43] Kroetsch says of Grove that "[a]s his reality, so to speak, comes into doubt, he comes more and more to represent our own predicament."[44] We might say the same of Jeremy.

Madham attributes one thing to Jeremy which is corroborated by Jeremy himself: his need to seek out the wilderness. Jeremy substitutes the border for the frontier, and performs the

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[42] Wood, "Reinventing the Word," p. 37.

[43] Peter Thomas, Robert Kroetsch (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1980), p. 3.

[44] Robert Kroetsch, "The Canadian Writer and the American Literary Tradition," in "Robert Kroetsch: Essays," Open Letter, 5th ser., no. 4 (Spring 1983), p. 14. All further references to this work ("Canadian Writer") appear in the text.

liberating but risky act of crossing it.[45] He is very like Melville's "judicious, unencumbered travellers...who cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet bag,--that is to say, the Ego"[46] except that he has left his suitcase behind. Jeremy fastens on the dream of Grey Owl and wilderness when he is playing the Indian with the other children on the street:

> I didn't want to be the Indian at all. They told me, You be the Indian, Sadness. We'll hunt you down. No matter where you hide, we'll hunt you down. We'll kill you. And they threw broken bricks and they tied me up....So the tailor across the hall from my mother's apartment brought me in his books of Grey Owl; one by one, he brought them. Unfolded them. Unveiled them. He gave me his dream of the European boy who became... pathfinder...borderman...the truest Indian of them all.
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> When I was old enough, brave enough, a teaching assistantship in my bedroll, I fled Greenwich Village....Yes, to the wilderness. To a labyrinth of streets and highways and corridors through which, in nine years, I did not learn to find my way. (94)

What Jeremy sees as wilderness is Binghamton, the centre of cultivation and civilization that Madham fled to from the northern prairie. Jeremy's and Madham's imaginations make Binghamton signify whatever it does for each of them. As Kroetsch points out repeatedly, truth is not absolute: "A lie, I thought to myself. A downright lie. What has happened to truth?" (70). Kroetsch

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[45] Russell M. Brown, "Crossing Borders," Essays on Canadian Writing, no. 22 (Summer 1981), p. 159.

[46] Quoted in Brown, "Crossing Borders," p. 161.

would say that nothing has happened to truth, but much has happened to our idea of it, and whether or not we even believe that it exists. Much of Gone Indian illustrates that, especially in the new world, truth, reality, and individual existence are not fixed and are not what we may have thought them to be.

Madham offers numerous clues to his "real" name and identity: Robert Sunderman, the young man who disappeared playing hockey on a frozen slough. He and Sunderman both have "the perfect physique"; Madham is the same age as Sunderman would be; at the end of the novel he grieves that Worlds End, which he has come to love as well as if it were his own (154), is deserted.[47] When he tells us that Jeremy dreamed northwest he says of himself: "I am a western boy who ever dreamed east" (95):

> The forest of my own intent is inhabited by strange creatures, surely. The figure of Roger Dorck for one comes to haunt me. He was a dedicated man who spent his life caring for the family of a drowned friend. I cannot for a moment accept the notion that his 'accident' was motivated by disappointment in love. Accident is a part of our daily lives; if not, then all of modern physics is madness. Are not explanations themselves assigned almost at random? (51)

Of course Madham assigns explanations at random to Jeremy's actions, but Kroetsch is pointing up a more widespread disorder. Most revealing is Madham's admission that he has caused Jeremy's

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[47] See Arnold Davidson's "Will the Real R. Mark Madham Please Stand Up: A Note on Robert Kroetsch's Gone Indian," Studies in Canadian Literature, 5, no. 3 (1980), pp. 135-139.

trip to "his" northwest. He casts it as a fulfillment of Jeremy's childhood dream, but clearly it is his own quest that Jeremy fulfills vicariously for him:

> The truth is, I was myself born out there on those wind-torn prairies, on the ripped edge of that northern forest—the details are unimportant. Perhaps I never mentioned as much to Jeremy. But no, he was the student, not I, and it was I who set him his demanding task, his continent's interior to discover...I sent him out there as on a mission, as on a veritable quest for something forever lost to me and yet recoverable to the world. (13-14)

That something lost to Madham is not only his wife, with whom Jeremy disappears at the end of the novel, but the magical possibilities which are opened up in the west. Bizarre events begin even before Jeremy is mistaken for Roger Dorck: in the Customs room at the airport he encounters the young blonde smuggler disguised as a woman, who says he was a buffalo in a previous life. Jeremy responds by leaving the Customs quarters disguised as himself, but is mistaken for Dorck due to an exchange of luggage. The series of events thus started cannot be stopped—already the ending has been determined: "Mr. Dorck must have read in this notebook, trying to discover who took his suitcase. And he printed across the bottom of the page: 'THIS, THEN, IS HOW IT ENDED' " (23).

In contrast to Jeremy, Madham appears to be satisfied with the civilized life—it is what he sought. Madham escaped that strange western place, and as mysteriously as Jeremy eventually

does: no one knows whether or not he actually went through the ice, or if so, if it was an accident. His father's "[n]ever found hide nor hair of my boy" (131) heightens the comedy--a body could not disappear in a frozen slough. Nevertheless, Madham vanishes as completely as Jeremy does later, and with as little explanation. There are some similarities: Madham/Sunderman leaves a hole in the ice; Jeremy's tape recorder from which Madham constructs them both is left hanging from a bridge over a frozen river. Their ends are prefigured early in the book: "You [Jill] knocked a hole in the ice with your laugh. He [Jeremy] leaped. He plunged in at the broken edge. Returned, returned. Into the bath of cold, and down. The white world around him turning black" (43). Madham is sure that Jeremy perished rather than escaped in the way he remembers because if Jeremy got away like he did, Jeremy would experience the same metamorphosis and be him: "It would surely seem impossible that anyone might drown in all that ice and snow. God knows, I shall never forget it. And yet, Robert Sunderman went through the ice. Or knocked a hole in the ice and disappeared....No; it is just possible" (155). At the end Madham is "persuaded" by his jealousy and envy that the lovers could only have disappeared into death:

> She [Carol] would have them hop down from the train, even as Grey Owl and Anahareo might have jumped headlong out of a boxcar with their few surviving beaver. With all the unbounded wilderness rolling to the north. Making a clean break into the last forest....'No,' I told her. 'Not ever....I came east on that same line, rode through a hard winter. I waved at

> the section hands who only stood stock
> still in the blistering cold air and let
> me go. I saw the rivers running north.
> Under the ice and snow: locked—' (153)

He is unwilling to believe that Jeremy may have escaped as he did, or that the possibilities he denied himself could ever have become real for Jeremy. Madham's concluded self is dearly won by exile and denial.[48]

Madham carefully cultivates his persona as the dignified professor. He "grasps" at "the professor's domain: the world of reflection, of understanding. The insight born of leisurely and loving meditation. The word made human. Jeremy, it would seem, only uttered a curse" (13). When irritated or threatened by Jeremy's tapes, however, his dignified demeanour lapses and with it his language: "The poor fucker finally flipped out. He was a buffalo's ass from the word go" (106). Madham must claim prior ownership when Jeremy makes Madham's northwest his own: "I must break my silence, Miss Sunderman. Your idiot lascivious student knew nothing: and yet would dare to dream my northwest" (101). When his control slips he gives away his past:

> Is it not odd, this impulse in the
> erring man: this need to divulge, to
> confess? This little need assumed immense
> proportions as Jeremy let himself be
> propelled by unconscious desires into
> self-revelation. To get into a corner on
> those vast prairies is not easy. And yet
> the words of self-betrayal flowed like a
> spring flood, like the waters from a
> breached dam, rolling and tossing and

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[48] Thomas, Robert Kroetsch, p. 69.

breaking a lost body into oblivion...
(95-96)

The entire novel is a function of Madham's need to confess. What he says about Jeremy can be said of himself: Jeremy not only becomes Madham, but Madham in a sense becomes Jeremy as he is revealed through him. As Jill bends over Jeremy's open suitcase and creates him out of its contents (20), she is creating Madham as well: his life is on display in his comments on Jeremy's work. When Jeremy enters Madham's former world he shares parts of his life, and other people's as well. Eventually he becomes Madham/Sunderman with Bea: "You came back. I have been waiting. It was a long time" (148). In the diffusion of personality we are left with, in Arnold Davidson's words, two unclear self-portraits joined in one blurred double exposure.[49] The diffusion of personality is completed when Jeremy disappears.

In the northwest Jeremy enters completely into the carnival world where the usual rules of behaviour and logic do not apply. Kroetsch presents this in the form of the Notikeewin Winter Festival, to which Jeremy is irresistibly drawn. All identity comes into question in the carnival world, until Kroetsch seems to be asking if we know who we are, or if we exist at all. It is an ironic and absurd world: in his Grey Owl outfit Jeremy is the one who looks most like an Indian—Joe Beaver's children giggle and ask why his hair is that way (65)--and is eventually mistaken for one: Jeremy and Grey Owl are the truest Indians of them all.

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[49] Davidson, "Will the Real R. Mark Madham," p. 136.

Jeremy discards his identity and his hold on reality: all things are possible as the boundaries between humans, and between humans and animals are dissolved. Mistaken for Dorck, who is the winter king, Jeremy re-enacts his snowmobile accident and finds another world under the snow: "Snow on my eyelashes told me that I was inside a snowman, looking out on a strange, distant world....Say no more. Listen to the fall of silence, hear your own last breath and know for one instant you are no longer" (40). He wins the snowshoe race, although he has never worn snowshoes before: "[l]ike a bear that was learning to dance" (82) he runs right out of himself (90) and has to be dragged down at the end of the race as he heads further west to the Rocky Mountains. During the race his human identity comes oddly close to the earth and the animal kingdom: he is urged on by a magpie that travels with him, he passes other runners by swerving to follow a rabbit, he dreams a buffalo and stumbles with it at the old buffalo jump. He cannot "connect," however, either visually or in language, to the men who look like muskrats and beat him for being an Indian and winning: "Again I did not answer. When I might have saved myself, simply by speaking. But I would not speak. For if I had tried, it would have been a tongue I did not understand" (93). The transformation is complete—the next time Jeremy loses language he will disappear.

The diffusion of identities is complicated by the repetitions in the novel: the cowboy and Roger Dorck are both injured by wild flights and falls through the air; Dorck is Bea

Sunderman's lover both before she marries Sunderman and after his disappearance, and Jeremy replaces Dorck with Bea and as Winter King; Sunderman telephoned Bea after his disappearance, which is re-enacted when Jeremy calls for Dorck after Dorck's accident; Bea's daughter becomes Dorck's lover after Bea's disappearance because he thinks she is a younger Bea; Bea disappears as her husband did, while Carol says that she would have gone with her husband; Madham replaces Jeremy with his wife, while Jeremy replaces Madham/Sunderman with his; Madham, with Carol, acts out the buffalo mating that Jeremy dreams; Carol is the same age as Madham/Sunderman's daughter Jill. Jeremy is acting out Madham's conflicting desire to return to the open possibilities of a disordered realm which he will not undertake precisely because of its lack of limit: "Carol, in her own delightful way, fails to grasp the consequence of the northern prairies to human definition: the diffusion of personality into a complex of possibilities rather than a concluded self" (152). Madham will not risk that diffusion--even though he may occasionally be "suffocating in this place [Binghamton], saturated, walled in, drowning" he will not go back, or even leave Carol's bed (152).

As well as rites of transformation, the carnival includes ritual tests of strength and endurance: "Combat, goddamnit, that's what it is. Trial by strength. Trial by chance. Trial by wager. Trial by drowning in your own sweat. Trial by freezing your balls off. Trial by falling. Trial by flying" (75). The highlight of the carnival occurs when Jeremy has to choose the

Winter Queen from three identical contestants: "I mean, they didn't just bear a striking resemblance to each other. They were impeccable duplicates. They might have been Xeroxed copies of some lost original..." (112). He agonizes over the impossible choice, not knowing until afterward that the contest is rigged: "You're a figurehead...You're not supposed to judge...They sell tickets. The person who gets the most buyers is the winner" (120). Which reminds us of Dorck's comment in Jeremy's notebook at the beginning: this, then, is how it ended.

Jeremy's personality is, of course, diffused into a complex of possibilities which he finds at least as fascinating as they are frightening. The carnival reverses the usual order of things and raises uncommon questions and possibilities. Jeremy is plagued by problems of identity: they might be said to define him. His clothes, his idea of what Grey Owl should look like, are both a disguise and a reflection of his own identity. When he tries to be Grey Owl, Madham casts him instead as a savage: "He is sloppy, uptight, unclean: your version of a savage....Jeremy is unshaven and wears no shirt over his bare chest. He has come in out of the icy sunlight in his levis and moccasins and his buckskin jacket. For your scalp. For your maidenhood" (21-22). His real Indian transformation happens only when Joe Beaver and his wife rescue him after his beating, dress him in Joe's clothes, and tell him "Grey Owl would be proud....He was brave like you" (100-101).

The most radical questioning of the nature of existence and reality occurs in Jeremy's buffalo dreams. The buffalo seem to Jeremy to be a symbol of a positive, primitive force in mythical and historical as well as personal terms. The settlement of the west is undone as Jeremy dreams the return of the buffalo to the prairie and a reversal of history:

> And the buffalo came back in his dreaming. Out of the north they came....And the herds moved onto the bald prairies. The wheatfields were gone....Tell the Bloods. The cattle are gone from the prairie ranches; the ranches are gone. Tell the Piegans. The wolves are come from the north, are waiting to eat. The grizzly comes down from the western mountains. Tell the Stonies to build the buffalo pound. Tell the squaws to gather buffalo chips. Tell the dogs to be silent. Tell the hunter to get for his medicine bundle.... (101-103)

He also dreams the scalping of Edmonton, an undoing of white settlement, and his new name:

> 'Now,' he [Poundmaker] said, 'you are Has-Two-Chances.'
>
> It was as if the calling of the name itself awakened him. Or perhaps it was only the motion of the moving truck. But he found himself in a dark so dark he might have been in a womb. Dreaming the world to come. (106)

His transformation is made complete by his sexual success with Buffalo Woman: "Lumpish and swollen, he could not tell the real from the feigned. The beast imagining the beast imagining the beast" (108). Madham thinks that Jeremy is fascinated by buffalo because they "make love standing up" (106), but the incident is clearly more than simply a solution of his physical problem: it

signifies the potency and power he does not have in his Jeremy Sadness life and has found here, which is why he will not go back.

The questioning of history, existence, and identity in Jeremy's dream and throughout the novel calls into question the nature of place and reality. Kroetsch suggests that Jeremy's and Madham's northwest has many of the characteristics of the carnival because the physical place, the landscape, causes a change in existence, perception, and reality. Here is Jeremy on the topic: "It was my own theory at the time that man living in wide-open spaces had a different relation to objects: because he could see where he stood, where he was going" (87). Jeremy certainly has a different clarity of vision here and seemingly Madham did as well, which would explain both their actions. Humans are not simply transformed into other people or animals, but are connected to the earth: at one point Kroetsch describes Jeremy and Jill, covered in snow, as "moving landscapes" (57). Madham explains the mysteries of the place in terms of physical conditions, and ascribes to Jeremy the symptoms of arctic hysteria: "The extreme cold, the long nights, the solitude of unbounded space: these are the enemies that induce that northern ecstasy....At any rate, the afflicted person, quite commonly, senses the presence of another who is not in fact there" (123-124). As well as being boundless and curiously immaterial (surely a reference to Jeremy Bentham), the landscape is timeless: at World's/Worlds End all the clocks are stopped. Madham as much as admits that the presence of unbounded space and the absence of time have driven him east:

> Your Jeremy, growing up in the east, felt compelled to play Indian; I can only assure you I have been Indian enough. I prefer to forget the experience, and yet I do recollect the sense of being--how shall I say?--trapped in the blank indifference of space and timelessness. And I would insist it was just that--the pressure not of time, but of its absence--that horrified those brave men who stumbled onto the central plateau of Antarctica. (124)

The physical nature of the place affects the perception of it as well as the nature of existence there. The blank indifference of space and timelessness is real, and determines what human efforts will succeed: clearly in Kroetsch's opinion it only just allows individual existence. Silence is related to space (Boundary 2, p. 1).

From the start Jeremy has seen that "[t]his is a peculiar land, Professor. Illusion is rife" (8). In such a place the only shared reality is brought into existence with language: "That's when the driver said, 'Notikeewin.' As if by speaking the name he had created a place on the blank earth" (16). Kroetsch suggests, though, that the world thus created is a mirage, where Jeremy at least could disappear: "They [the telegraph poles] made me notice the space--they or their shadows on the snow, on the horizon--and I couldn't even pretend to sleep. Because if I did I might wink out and be gone forever" (15). Of course that is exactly what he eventually does--the place makes him disappear into itself. Jeremy is positioned on the boundary between reality as he knows it and some other order--like Madham, one false move and he

becomes something else. In the "virulence and vise of his fatal impulse to seek out the unknown" (72) Jeremy, with Columbus, invents his new world: "The Columbus quest for the oldest New World. The darkest gold. The last first. I was lifting my hidden face. To the gateway beyond. To the place of difficult entrance. To the real gate of the dreamed cave....I had tongued the unspeakable silence" (147). The sexual metaphor functions both for the process of creation and the limit of language: Jeremy loses words for the second time when he is in bed with Bea. His final transformation occurs as he moves out of language:

> I shall, at last, commence my dissertation. Christopher Columbus, not knowing that he had not come to the Indies of his imagination. Imagined that he had come to the Indies....I am going to lie here for the rest of my life, talking, recording everything. Until I can think nothing that I do not speak. Speaking. Until the inside and the outside are one, united— (149)

Rather than inventing the place he invents the act of discovering. Columbus never finds the Indies, only the act of finding. The moment of the discovery of America does continue.[50] Columbus's perceptual moment cannot end: now the poet enacts the discovery and confronts the place. When the inside and the outside are the same, Jeremy no longer exists, which is where he has been tending throughout—reaching through the mirror to touch his own skin, fearing that Dorck's suitcase may contain his own possessions

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[50] The title of Kroetsch's preface to Eli Mandel's Dreaming Backwards, 1981. See note 20 above.

(19), metamorphosing from man to beast and back. Jeremy rejects the method of his self-creation and turns off the tape recorder. He discovers the failure of the word and rejects metaphor and language,[51] which has large significance for the world that language has created. Bea's house is truly Jeremy's world's end.

Madham would have it that Jeremy and Bea flee to be cornered like animals (157), run down by a train that was "both off schedule and using a track it was not supposed to be on" (153). The strangeness of the place appropriately enough persists, and Jeremy is literally and metaphorically gone. In a sense he has the same problem as Johnnie Backstrom and the boy on the bull in The Words of My Roaring: since they don't lose they have to find a way to get off.[52] Jeremy jumps. Grey Owl makes a new life as an imposter and an illusion; in Jeremy's jump between illusion and reality,[53] which way is which? After he tongues the unspeakable silence of the Columbus quest for the oldest New World, he ceases to speak and thus ceases to exist--his words are all that are left of him. He escapes into story: "The rest is fiction" (157). Jeremy becomes a fiction, the title of the novel. To go Indian is his fictive naming: the fiction makes him, and us, real.

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[51] MacKendrick, "The Modern Canadian Novel of Exhaustion," p. 25.

[52] Surette discusses the dilemma of Johnnie and the boy on the bull in The Words of My Roaring, and argues that Johnnie is made Fortune's fool through good rather than bad luck ("Fabular Fiction," pp. 17-18).

[53] Roderick Harvey, "The Limitations of Media," Canadian Literature, no. 77 (Summer 1978), p. 24.

Kroetsch has raised a serious and complex issue: if we make our place in language, and language is a game, what is the nature of place? Clearly place—and self—can be spoken out of as well as into existence. It is an unstable balance to maintain, a difficult negotiation of the liminal phase which threatens to become permanent. That appears to be what Madham feared, being mired between worlds, yet the trip into the middle passage is a positive move for Jeremy. In a sense Jeremy is an older new-world man than Madham, and after having experienced the so-called civilization of the east first-hand wants to return to a more golden place and time: in illo tempore. The release from identity which he welcomes is a risk Madham will not take; he opts instead for security, antiques, and the dignity of his grey temples. Who wins and who loses we cannot and Kroetsch does not tell.

Kroetsch raises the question not only of what this does to language, but of what it does to the speaker: Jeremy ceases to exist when he does not talk; Madham, having disappeared once, talks incessantly. Kroetsch's fictional protagonists are not artists or writers: the portrait is of a character making sense of self and place in language, but not as a professional wordsmith. Kroetsch holds that every individual has to create him or her self and place, and that in that process the writer has no particular advantage. He does not make the writer a sacred or

mythical figure but reminds us that he is first human, and can be silent/silenced.[54]

Kroetsch circles back to language, and construction in language: his northwest exists only in his, Madham's, and Jeremy's words. The social place here is obviously in a state of becoming, of possibilities rather than certainties. The ending of Gone Indian must be as it is: we are left with a teller we do not trust and a tale we cannot realistically believe. If Jeremy is on the pendulum swing between worlds--not unlike Richardson's bridge over the abyss--Kroetsch shows him swinging so far out that he disappears. He does not so much enter the middle passage as exit the process entirely--or fall out of cosmologies (Labyrinths, p. 25). As Kroetsch says, to go into pure chaos is to vanish (Labyrinths, p. 25).

Time and history are very short in Canada: our social construction is still very much in process, and our idea of the place may be far from the reality we do not yet know. We create our place and ourselves in it, complete with our random, accidental names. Jeremy remains in motion: endings be damned (24) indeed. Kroetsch believes that the absence of certainties is not a disadvantage or a falsehood: the absence of limit is the

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[54] See "How I Joined the Seal Herd" and "The Silent Poet Sequence" in Field Notes.

presence of possibility. As Madham says, getting into a corner on the prairie is difficult.[55]

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[55] E. D. Blodgett argues that in English Canadian fiction of the West, one does precisely that: the frontiers of the English-speaking West were drawn in linear patterns of railroad, survey lines, and sections that enforced a geographic and psychological closure even as they opened the West. He argues further that this contradiction extends to include a further contradiction between the geometric design of place and the genres of the West's literature. In one sense the linear design applies to Gone Indian: there is no suggestion that Jeremy's journey is cyclical. But I would argue that it is precisely this contradiction between the perception of place and the manner in which place is presented in literature that Kroetsch addresses. Jeremy wants to carry his quest further and he can: he is not trapped, either in the northwest or in reality. Because Kroetsch deliberately makes the place more real in language than in fact, Jeremy can transfigure himself out of it into what can be seen as an extension of the tall tale world he has encountered from his arrival: Jeremy goes Indian, and disappears. Thus Blodgett, Kroetsch, and I can find a common point: "to go west was to enter the mind's geometry, a long journey, one might say, of self-reflection, of finding one's self lost" (E. D. Blodgett, "Gone West to Geometry's Country," in Configuration, pp. 187-218).

SIX: CONCLUSION

WRITING THE NEW WORLD

I have been investigating the narrative of the new world experience; Canada and its literature have served as my model of a new world culture and its narrative. I am particularly interested in the structure of the new world experience--in Robert Kroetsch's terms, the grammar of the narrative.[1] Making a country and making a literature are in many ways parallel acts, and affected by the same phenomenon: the experience of the middle passage. A country's writers bring a culture beyond the middle passage, and articulate the structures upon which the new society is based. Those structures are difficult to determine and to place in a new world on a new continent; the process is equally difficult in a new society on an old continent.[2]

This study has examined the process of naming, of both place and people, that takes place in literature. A place does not exist as a social or ideological construct until it is perceived as something; until that perception occurs it cannot be put into discourse by language, by an assertion against silence. We do not discover new worlds, but invent them. In my analysis of works

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[1] Robert Kroetsch, "The Grammar of Silence: Narrative Patterns in Ethnic Writing," Canadian Literature, no. 106 (Fall 1985), p. 65.

[2] Belgium, for instance, is only slightly older than Canada: it declared its independence in 1830. Its literature is no less new, although the cultural fragments of which the country is made have not experienced the displacement of the European cultures in North America.

by Major John Richardson, Frederick Philip Grove, Sheila Watson, and Robert Kroetsch I have concentrated on that activity of speaking and assertion, an act of social construction. The gaps and silences in their works call attention to the lack of structure in the world these writers inhabit and write about. They must create both framework and content, and create the new world's meaning. Their writing is their invention of the world.

I have argued that we must name the place before it can exist in any meaningful way; our writers perform that act of naming. I have also argued that there is some difficulty in that naming if we do not know where we are, which I believe is the central problematic of a new world culture. The writers here have all found the definition of place equivocal, in literary as well as in personal terms. Official national designation has been an issue for them because of their place, and because of the stage at which they have participated in the history of their place, and entered the narrative.

John Richardson was born in the new world, on the border between the United States and what was first called Upper Canada, then Canada West, and subsequently re-designated as a province of the Dominion of Canada by the British North America Act of 1867 some fifteen years after his death. Richardson lived in many places during his life, but "Canada" was not one of them: in Wacousta he specifies that that naming refers to Lower Canada or Canada East, and its citizens are of French ancestry. Richardson might as well have been an immigrant: his displacements from both

old and new worlds were no less traumatic than if he had been born in Britain. As it was, he was a British soldier, in the British army, acting for British causes in the War of 1812 and later in Europe and in the West Indies.[3] He remained a colonial and tried to live in British North America, although he certainly was not placed here. His uncertainty about his own national designation informs much of his North American writing.[4] Without models for his new world experience or language for its expression, his material is almost out of control. He has neither the structural nor historical framework to allow the fundamental questions of the new society, nor the language in which those questions could be posed.

Frederick Philip Grove's difficulty with national designation is multiplied by his falsification of his past, his nationality, and his name. He suffers the complex fate of removal[5] first hand and is both exile and immigrant: his separation from the old world is attended by the necessity of erasing the facts of his existence there and creating a new

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[3] He also wrote for a British audience, and sought success and reputation in Britain.

[4] If Beasley's assertion in his biography of Richardson that Richardson's maternal grandmother was an Ottawa Indian is true, Richardson's new world position is even more complicated. Contemporary scholars seem to accept this assertion as fact, although Beasley does not cite his evidence.

[5] This is how J. J. Healy refers to the new world experience in the title of his article "Literature, Removal and the Theme of Invisibility in America: A Complex Fate Revisited," Dalhousie Review, 61, no. 1 (Spring 1981), pp. 127-142.

identity and new life in North America. A German, a Swede, a Canadian: a search for America, for Abe Lincoln, for self. Grove was part of the phenomenon of immigration to the Canadian West in the early twentieth century, and claimed to be the spokesman of the immigrant pioneers. He became a Canadian citizen in 1919, but the new citizenship must have meant something different to him than it would have to a more ordinary immigrant. The immigrant experience determines much of his writing; the middle passage underlies all of it. His portraits of pioneers are sociological and ethical inquiries into human nature, and his autobiographical works show his desperate attempts to impose the order and structure on the landscape and on his life that he needed to make an authentic meaning out of his North American life. His writing is his attempt to create and to speak that meaning, and is not wholly successful. Near the end of his autobiography, which he has devoted to the construction and placement of his identity, he says that "I have often wondered if there is anything that I can legitimately call 'I.' "[6] Kroetsch holds that Grove "confesses that he cannot locate the 'I' that is the subject of the book."[7] We might say, rather, that Grove has lived the new world's problem of language in a way that Richardson, Watson, and Kroetsch have not. The statement of self, when both place and self are

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[6] Grove, In Search of Myself, p. 452.

[7] Kroetsch, "The Grammar of Silence," p. 69.

radically in question, remains tentative; "myself" and "America," the subjects of Grove's searches, are not fixed.

Sheila Watson has discussed the strangeness of being born in Canada as a British subject, of Irish origin, and _becoming_ a Canadian citizen.[8] That change in status, without a change in place or in self to cause it, is a curious reflection of the separation and re-aggregation phases of Turner's model of liminality. Watson experienced the middle phase of the process as well: she entered and exited national designations simply by _being here_. She also saw the middle passage enacted in the intermingling of races, cultures, and languages that she observed firsthand in western Canada.[9] _The Double Hook_ is her expression of what she saw: the creation of a new social group, a new sense of place, and a new language out of the fragments of exhausted and displaced traditions and rituals. Watson recreates the connections between signifier and signified, which have drifted apart, and specifies again _what words mean_. Only then is communication possible; only then can language and human being be dragged back from the edge of non-meaning where Coyote's voice threatens. And only then do figures bear an authentic relationship to their ground.

Robert Kroetsch is of the generation for whom national designation must be an issue in personal terms, because it is not

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[8] In conversation with E. D. Blodgett, on March 30, 1986, among others.

[9] In conversation with Shirley Neuman.

in official terms. Kroetsch is firmly placed in Canada: he is born in Alberta in a period when the West is experiencing a rapid rise in both population and national significance. He is not an immigrant: Europe is far behind at least one side of his family, which spent several generations in eastern Canada before moving west. But "Canada" is no less difficult for Kroetsch to negotiate: he has to go away to make it real. He enacts the emigrant experience, and draws attention to the nowhereness of here by leaving, and writing his place from a distance. It is as if Grove had written of Germany: Kroetsch makes himself an exile and writes nostalgically of the place he has left.[10] Gone Indian enacts that departure and discovery in mirror image: Jeremy, the American, comes to Canada to find himself and his place, and instead finds the past and the place of the Canadian who has staged his suicide and fled to the American east. Jeremy eventually disappears into the place Madham dreaded. Jeremy's and Madham's doubled relationship echoes the doubled relationship of language and place, both of which function as site in Kroetsch's fiction and poetry.

Watson's and Kroetsch's attention to language in their texts is explicit and intended, and calls attention to the ontological status of their country. They are able to raise this issue because of their time: they participate in the intellectual

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[10] In conversation with Shirley Neuman. Kroetsch has completed the journey, and has been living and writing in Canada for several years now.

tradition of the twentieth century, and silence and absence are part of that tradition and its discourse.[11] Logically, then, a discussion of their work involves these phenomena, because they raise them themselves. The case is somewhat different, however, with Richardson and Grove. I have identified silence and absence in their works as well, and argued that their occurrence there is not intentional but inevitable, and is in spite of their best efforts. The point remains, however, that although the appropriate language is not yet available, the conditions of the culture which I have focussed on as central to its literature are of the same order for Richardson and Grove as they are for Watson and Kroetsch, and thus require their works to raise similar issues. The concerns voiced by Watson and Kroetsch and which I have argued come out of place, to use the doubled sense of Eli Mandel's phrase, alert us to similar concerns, now visible, in Richardson's and Grove's works. That place is western Canada which, in its peculiarly unformed nature that Watson and Kroetsch play on, makes visible the form of both the country and the literature. As readers, then, we are writing the narrative in the sense Hayden White uses, or putting the country into discourse:

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[11] Silence and absence are suggested by the texts studied here and are present in them, but they also constitute a phenomenon in themselves. The discussion of silence is approached from various directions by Jacques Lacan, George Steiner, and John Cage, while the particular silence of women informs much writing by feminists and by women, including the work of Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich, and Virginia Woolf, among others. A genealogy of absence could be similarly charted, with significant notations by Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Friedrich Nietzsche.

we are involved in making the text mean, not only in contemporary works which may invite a writerly approach, to use Roland Barthes's terms, but in works formerly thought to be conventional, traditional, and readerly.

It should not be remarkable that recognizing givens as constructs, and then interrogating those constructs threaten to undo place and self, the substantiality of which is interdependent. Neither should it be remarkable that the discontinuity between the old world and the new is accompanied by a loss of language, a violent silence as Kroetsch would have it.[12] Writing at the western frontiers of their place in their time, Richardson, Grove, Watson, and Kroetsch are also writing at the frontiers of language. It is language, or more precisely its lack, that shows most clearly just what the absence of an articulated place means. In various ways in their works they show individuals and cultures caught in silence in the gap between worlds and words. The new world experience carries a burden of silence and of anxiety that without a structure of meaning the human may disappear. New world literature begins with this silence and absence, and the necessity of salvaging from it a kind of presence. This act of salvation must be an activity of language, in language; we can see that activity occurring in certain Canadian texts. The imperative of new world writers is to re-create meaning and connection, in an effort to secure themselves and their place, and to present the culture to itself.

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[12] Kroetsch, "The Grammar of Silence," p. 66.

This imperative informs the writing that has been the subject of this study.

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